

Living Masters of Music

GIACOMO PUCCHINI



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LIVING MASTERS OF MUSIC
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GIACOMO PUCCINI





Butterfly.



Giuseppe Puccini

London 23 oct. 1905

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GIACOMO PUCCINI

I

PUCCINI, AND THE OPERA IN GENERAL

A BIG broad man, with a frank open countenance, dark kindly eyes of a lazy lustrous depth, and a shy retiring manner. Such is Giacomo Puccini, who is operatically the man of the moment.

It was behind the scenes during the autumn season of opera at Covent Garden in 1905 that I had the privilege of first meeting and talking with him, and about the last thing I could extract from him was anything about his music. While his reserve comes off like a mask when he is left to follow his own bent in conversation, one can readily understand why he adheres, and always has done, to his rule of never conducting his own works.

One thing struck me as peculiarly characteristic about his nature and personality. The success of *Madama Butterfly*—for that was the work in progress on the stage as we passed out by way of the “wings” to the front of the house—was at the moment the talk of the town. Puccini was full, not of the success of his opera, but of the achievements of the artists who were interpreting it. “Isn’t Madame

So-and-so fine ? ” “ Doesn't Signor So-and-so conduct admirably ? ” “ Isn't it beautifully put on ? ” The composer was content and happy to sink into the background and think, in the triumph, of all he owed to those who were carrying out his ideas. He has a quiet sense of fun, too. “ Let us step quietly,” he said—as we came into the range of the scene that was being enacted—“ like butterflies.”

I have called Puccini the operatic man of the moment. It is not difficult to account for his popularity. His whole-souled devotion to this one form of musical art, in which he has certainly achieved much, has by some been pointed to as defining his limits. Apart from a few early string quartets, which mean nothing more than the usual preliminary studies of a gifted student, Puccini has written absolutely nothing but operas since he started. In this respect his music has a certain well-defined natural characteristic that gives him—if it be necessary in these days to fit any particular composer into his own special niche—a distinct place in the history of the progress and development of the art and science of music making.

Roughly speaking, the opera had its beginnings in the dance, but almost at the same time it travelled along the road of the development of vocal expression by music. As early as the days of Peri and Caccini, who reverted to the old Greek drama as the basis on which to build something anew, and by so doing brought forth the germ which was afterwards to bear fruit through Gluck and Wagner, the feeling for freedom of expression, the desire to snatch music away

from the tyranny of a set form—counterpoint, as it was then understood—strove to make itself felt and understood. It must not be taken to mean that the old contrapuntists did not endeavour to combine the adherence to a form with some degree of definite expression ; for in the works of one of the greatest of this school, old Josquin des Près, are to be found plenty of emotional touches by which, even in so restricted a pattern as the madrigal form, it was plain that a closer union between words and music—an emotional feeling, in short—was clearly the thing striven for.

Still dealing briefly with beginnings, one may point to the dramatic cantatas—particularly in Italy, but found in France as well—or madrigal plays, by which, in distinction to what may be called little comedies with music, this essential “operatic” feature in the union of the arts of speech and song, comes out with special clearness.

In Italy then, the land which owns Puccini as one of its most distinguished sons, the opera had its rise ; and in *Dafne*, the first child of a new art, it is curious to note, it immediately turned aside into one of those many by-paths which led it very far away from the goal of its promise. Curious again is the reason for its first fall—the desire of the leading singer for vocal display, and the introduction of long vocal flourishes, which, having nothing to do with the case, yet pleased the public mightily. In this *Dafne*—the score of which has been lost—it was the great singer Archilei who was the offender. Yet again a strange thing

comes down to us after these many years. Peri, the composer, was highly delighted with the interpolations and the vocal gymnastics.

But out of something dead, something very much alive was destined to develop. The old Greek drama was not to be resuscitated by a sort of transfusion of blood—music, the newest and most emotional of the arts, being the medium to carry life into the structure. There is not space here to do more than hint at the various fresh phases—the reforms, as they have been called—each of which, in trying to deal with what was already built up, really brought to an achievement the ideal which had floated before many a worker in the same field.

In Italy, as early as Cimarosa's day—he died in 1801—the opera, regarded purely as a musical form, attained as near perfection as possible. It is difficult, even when dealing with a period that, unlike our own, was very much more concerned about the manner than the matter of things, to distinguish between the various styles of opera; but taking the opera seria and the opera buffa as representing two great phases of the art, Cimarosa stands out as one who combined the essential qualities of both into products which had the stamp of individuality. Pergolesi is another shining light who stands out in the long line of illustrious workers whose efforts were entirely cast into the shade by the arrival of Rossini and his followers, Donizetti and Bellini. All this time, during which so-called Italian opera dominated the whole of Europe, nothing was done in Italy in the way of developing orchestral

writing, which in Germany had made such marvellous strides. At the psychological moment—for Italy—came Verdi, who, if he took the opera very much as he found it, breathed from the very first a new spirit into its composition. His artistic growth, as seen by his later operas, was one of the most remarkable things in modern musical history. And in the fulness of time we come to Puccini, to whom it is reasonable to point as the successor of Verdi. These two, who may be linked up with reason with Boito and Ponchielli, present many features of resemblance. Puccini's musical expression, at first purely vocal, has in his later work shown that same growth in artistic development. From the beginning he was concerned with the continuous flow of melody, since he had not, like Verdi, to get away exactly from the old form of the set numbers; but in Puccini's case, the growth referred to is seen in his latest work in the further elaboration of the orchestral portion. Although in England we have had few experiments worked out in the way of the development of opera, it is safe to say that such new modern works as have been taken to our hearts have owed not a little to the orchestral part of the fabric. Tchaikovsky's *Eugen Oniegin* and Humperdinck's *Hänsel und Gretel* are at least two notable cases in point.

But in whatever way we view an opera, mere orchestral fulness will not serve to land the work very high up in the esteem of music lovers. Nor will the purely beautiful in music—melody worked out with transparent clearness of form—save a poor, unconvincing or uninteresting dramatic fabric from passing

into the great storehouse of the unacted. Puccini's music is dramatic, and by far the greater part of it, by a sort of quick natural instinct, is purely of the theatre. His first and most direct appeal is by the charm and vitality of the vocal expression, while his whole plan is one of movement. From the first—if we except for the moment his *Le Villi*, which was first called a ballet-opera—he called his operas *Dramma per lyrica*—lyric dramas, a term first established, and moulded into a definite art-form, by Wagner. With his first opera, Puccini started something of a new form in the short opera; and two remarkable works of the kind in *Cavalleria Rusticana* by Mascagni and *I Pagliacci* by Leoncavallo, which came very soon after, clearly indicate that he had founded a school as it were; and so from Italy to-day, as in times past, this particular fashion spread to other countries. Puccini, still exhibiting, with a strong and in many ways typical national feeling, spontaneous vocal melody as his leading characteristic, did not limit himself to the perfection of the short opera. His subsequent works were of larger calibre. He left the fanciful and imaginative and the old world legends, and turned to everyday life for his subjects. In general form—for one must revert to this not particularly lucid description when dealing with opera—Puccini must be placed among the shining lights who have chosen to deal with what may be called light opera. *Opéra comique*, as translated by our term “comic opera,” means something so entirely different, that although “light opera” is but a poor expression, it is one that may perhaps be most readily “understood of the people.”

The term "light" is associated practically entirely with the music. The subjects of Puccini's operas are all of them tragic, but the expression of the theme, the working out along the already roughly defined paths, is not by the heavy, the big, or the strongly moving in music. One may point almost to Bizet, as shown in *Carmen*, as the special point from which Puccini started. Furthermore, Puccini stands almost unrivalled in his own particular way in giving us, by means of operatic music, something very near akin to the comedy of manners in drama. Much might with advantage be deduced from the success of Puccini in this country, and the same result applied to the question of our national opera; or, seeing that such a thing does not exist, to the crying need for some encouragement to be given to native composers. Puccini, it may be, has become the vogue simply because he is light and lyrical, not so much here in the dramatic, but in the musical sense. No one, it is safe to say, at this time of day desires to go back in any shape or form to the old "set-number" sort of piece. Such a reversion may fittingly form the ideal towards which a follower of Sullivan—who in his *Yeomen of the Guard* gave us unquestionably the best definite "light" opera of the last generation—may strive to bring to perfection. Puccini has by the general mould of his work made his place and found his following on the operatic stage, and it is surely by the vocal strength and vocal continuity of his work that this place of his has been achieved and maintained. It is easy, of course, to point to the simplicity of the achievement when one sees the fruit of the labour: but without urging any one

to copy an accepted model, or to merely repeat what has been already designed, one may wonder why, with so many gifted melodists among contemporary British musicians, no one has given us definite light opera. It is a direction in which our composers have never moved. If a reason for Puccini's greatness—or popularity, if you will—is wanted, it may be found in this extremely clever use of the light lyrical style. And lest there be any misunderstanding, let it be said that hardly one of Puccini's songs or dramatic numbers can be pointed to as making this or that opera an accepted favourite. “*Che gelida manina*” from *La Bohème* is trotted out by not a few budding tenors, and it may be occasionally heard at a ballad concert, but even this is not sung one-tenth as many times as, say, the prologue to *I Pagliacci*, leaving out of the question the extreme popularity, as an instrumental piece, of the Intermezzo from *Cavalleria*. Puccini's melodies, if they do not actually fall to pieces away from their surroundings, at least very quickly lose their full significance, and not a little of their charm. And it is for this reason, therefore, that Puccini stands as the most definitely operatic composer of the moment. He has had great opportunities, it is true, but he has had great struggles. Like Wagner, he is concerned, and ever has been, with just one phase of art. To those that come after may be left the task of deciding as to his exact place in the roll of fame. By the oneness of his endeavour, by the sincerity of his expression, by the spontaneity of his vocal melody, does Puccini stand worthily among the living masters of music.



PUCCINI'S BIRTHPLACE IN THE VIA DI POGGIO, LUCCA

II

PUCCINI'S EARLY LIFE

IN Lucca in 1858, in a house in the Via Poggia, Giacomo Puccini was born. The family originally came from Celle, a typical mountain village on the right bank of the Serchio. From the earliest times the family was one devoted to the art of music, and while the world knows only of the musician who is the subject of this book, the achievements of his musical ancestors were of no mean order.

It will be sufficient to trace back the family to one of the same name, a Giacomo Puccini, who, born in 1712, studied with Caretti at Bologna. During his student days he was the friend of Martini, and thus from very early days the Puccini family have had intimate connection with those musicians whose names will live as long as musical history. On returning to Lucca this Puccini was appointed organist of the cathedral and subsequently *maestro di capella*. His compositions were entirely in the domain of ecclesiastical music, and include a motet, a Te Deum, and some services.

His son, Antonio, also proceeded to Bologna for his musical training, and in process of time succeeded to

the post at Lucca. Antonio's chief composition was a Requiem Mass, which was sung at Lucca on the occasion of the funeral of Joseph II. of Tuscany.

The first of the family to turn his attention to opera was Domenico Puccini, the son of the foregoing, who, like his father and grandfather, after studying at Bologna, and under the famous Paisiello at Naples, also held the post at Lucca. Of his several operas, *Quinto Fabio*, *Il Ciarlatano*, and *La Moglie Capricciosa* had a certain vogue in his day, but have passed into oblivion. Dying at the age of forty-four, he left four children, of whom Michele was the father of the Puccini with whom we are dealing.

The grandfather Antonio helped this young Michele and sent him to study at Bologna, where he came under the influence of Stanislaus Mattei, the teacher of Rossini. Later on he proceeded to Naples, where he was taught by Mercadente and Donizetti. Returning to Lucca he married Albina Magi, and was appointed Inspector of the then newly formed Institute of Music. Some masses and an opera, *Marco Foscari*, stand to his credit, but it was as a teacher that this Puccini did his best work. Among his pupils were Carlo Angeloni and Vianesi, who afterwards won distinction as a conductor, not only in Italy but at Paris and Marseilles.

Michele Puccini died at the age of fifty-one in 1864, leaving his wife, who was then thirty-three, to provide and care for his seven children. It is interesting to record that the famous Pacini, the composer of *Saffo*, which is still regarded as perhaps the chief classic of

the purely Italian school, conducted the Requiem sung at his funeral.

Puccini's mother and her noble work in bringing up her large family—for she was left with no great share of this world's goods—deserves infinitely more than this bare mention of her excellence. In the present instance, it is her patient care in making her fifth child, our Giacomo Puccini, a musician, that we have to recognise. But for this patience, the way of the man who was destined to achieve his own place in the annals of fame must have been still more rough. All praise then to the patient mother whose memory is still so lovingly cherished by her distinguished son.

Giacomo Puccini was only six when his father died, and as a child was remarkable for a restless nature and a keen desire to travel. He was sent to school at the seminary of S. Michele, and afterwards to San Martino. Arithmetic appears to have been his chief stumbling-block, but in everything, his curious irresponsible nature, his strong dislike to anything like guidance and restraint, made the acquisition of knowledge a hard task. Failing to acquire any sort of distinction in any branch of scholarship, an uncle of his, on his mother's side, tried to make him a singer; but the future musician, whose triumph was gained, curiously enough, in the display of the very art he despised, added, in this particular subject, one more to his many failures. The mother, in spite, doubtless, of a good deal of well-meant advice as to wasting time and money on a singularly unpromising youth, stuck to her conviction that Giacomo was destined by his

gifts to carry on the long line of family musicians ; and with many real sacrifices in the way of pinching and scraping, sent him to Lucca, where, at the Institute of Music, founded by Pacini, he came first under the influence of Angeloni, who, it will be remembered, was a pupil of his father. Infinite patience seems to have been the chief quality possessed by Angeloni, and by dint of great tact and sympathy, he infused an interest and something of a passion for music into his wayward young pupil. Giacomo became a fair player, and was sent off to take charge of the music at the church of Muligliano, a little village three miles from Lucca, and in a short time he had the church of S. Pietro at Somaldi added to his responsibilities. It was during the exercise of his church duties that the spirit of composition seems to have descended upon him, and certainly, if not in actually a novel way, a rather disconcerting one. During the offertory, and at other places in the Mass, it was the custom of the organist to improvise a more or less extended *pièce d'occasion*, a custom which still obtains. The officiating priests were more than occasionally startled by hearing, mixed up with these spirited improvisations of their young organist, certain plainly recognisable themes from operas, old and new.

There is no definite record of any specific continuation of studies while Puccini was contributing in a questionable way to the dignity of the church's service ; but in 1877 there was an exhibition at Lucca, and a musical competition was announced, a setting of a cantata *Funno*, and young Puccini entered. As hap-



CHURCH OF S. PIETRO, SOMALDI, WHERE PUCCINI WAS ORGANIST

pened with Berlioz, so too the young composer's work was rejected, as not conforming in any way with the accepted canons of the art of music. Puccini at this point gave an early indication of that doggedness of purpose, a quiet pursuance of his own aims and working out his own ideas, which marked his later career, and which must have come as rather a surprise to his family, who regarded him in all probability as a lazy wayward youth. He did not take the refusal of the Lucca authorities to accept his work the least to heart, but arranged for a performance of it, and the public found it very much to their taste. About this time another early composition, a motet for the feast of San Paolina, was performed. With these successes, Lucca and its restricted area, with the evidently uncongenial work of a church organist, soon became entirely distasteful to him, and after hearing Verdi's *Aïda* at the theatre, his mind was made up. To Milan, the Mecca of the young Italian musician, he must go.

His mother still was his best friend ; and although the cost of living and studying in Milan was sufficient to daunt the courage of any one far less hampered with domestic difficulties than she was, she bravely set about making the necessary sacrifices. Through a friend at Court, the Marchioness Viola-Marina, she enlisted the kindly sympathy of Queen Margherita, who generously agreed to be responsible for the expense of one of the necessary three years, while an uncle of hers came to her assistance by defraying the cost of the other two.

The Conservatory of Music at Milan is best known perhaps from the fact that the great teacher of singing,

Lamperti, whose pupils number Albani and Sembrich, was a professor there up to the date of his retirement, in 1875. With the Royal College at Naples it represents at the present day the only survival of the most ancient teaching schools which began to be founded in Italy at the end of the fifteenth century, the name Conservatorio being given to the union of music schools for the preservation of the art and science of music. The oldest of them were the four schools at Naples, all of which were attached to monastical foundations, and which had their rise in the schools founded by the Fleming, Tinctor. There were four other schools, similar as to their foundation, at Venice, the origin of which was due to another great Fleming, Willaert.

On reaching Milan, Puccini's first thought was to bring himself earnestly to study, and to pass the necessary examination for entrance into this "Reale Conservatorio de Musica." Apart from his steady determination to mend his haphazard ways, it is good to note that his good resolutions were put to the test, for he does not appear to have succeeded at the first trial. But he had grit in him, and he stuck to his work bravely; and in 1880, towards the end of October, he passed his entrance examination with flying colours, coming out with top marks over all the competitors. His actual work as a student did not begin till December 16 of that year, and we get from an interesting letter to his mother a vivid picture of his doings at this time. Bazzini, the master with whom he was put to study, will be remembered as the com-

composer of that favourite violin piece with virtuosi, the *Witches' Dance*.

"DEAR MAMMA,—On Thursday, at eleven o'clock, I had my second lesson from Bazzini, and I am getting on very well. To-morrow I start my theory lessons. My daily life is very simple. I get up at 8.30, and when I do not go to the school I stay indoors and play the pianoforte. For this I am trying now a new technical method by Angeloni, which is very simple.

"At 10.30 I have my lunch, and a short walk afterwards. At one I return home and study Bazzini's lesson for a couple of hours; after that from three to five I go to the piano again and play some classic. I have been playing through Boïto's *Mefistofele*, a kind friend having given me the vocal score. On! how I wish I had money enough to buy all the music I want to get!

"Five is dinner time, and it is a very frugal meal—soup, cheese, and half a litre of wine. As soon as it is over I go out for a walk and stroll up and down the Galleria. Now comes the end of the chapter—bed!"

All through the three years of his sojourn at Milan, Puccini, from the evidence of his letters which he sent home, seems to have preserved the simplicity of his nature, and to have kept in a remarkable way to his good resolutions. For composition he was put, shortly after his entrance, with Ponchielli, the composer of *La Gioconda*. For both his teachers Puccini had the liveliest admiration, and the following extract from another of his characteristic letters to his mother

towards the end of his student days, showed how lively an interest Ponchielli took in his future:—

“To-morrow I have to go to Ponchielli. I have already seen him this morning, but we have had little opportunity of talking about what I am to do in the future, as his wife was with him. However, he promised to mention me to Ricordi, and he assures me that in my examinations I have made a favourable impression. I am now working hard at my exercise, towards the completion of which I have made good progress.”

This exercise Puccini speaks of was the equivalent to the composition demanded by our Universities before a student passes to the degree of Bachelor of Music. With this *Capriccio Sinfonica* Puccini made his first mark as a rising composer. It was not apparently an entirely spontaneous outpouring, for he wrote it on all sorts of odd scraps of paper, just as the mood took him. It is curious to note that although in his general character he had made a radical change from waywardness to a steady determination and purposeful endeavour towards one definite goal, his methods of work and his music writing remained, to this day in fact, as very typical of the carelessness of the artistic temperament. His scores were, and still are, exceedingly difficult to decipher. Both Bazzini and Ponchielli were much attached to the promising young musician, but his handwriting—more particularly his way of setting down notes on paper—was more than once a great trial to their patience. Bazzini on one occasion inquired about this final exercise, and Ponchielli replied: “I really cannot tell you anything

yet about it. Puccini brings me every lesson such a vile scrawl, that I confess, up to the present, I do no more than stare at it in despair."

When Ponchielli came to sit down and study the score of this *Capriccio*, the black-beetle-like splotches on the untidy manuscript did not prevent the worth of the music from coming through and making its appeal to the kindly teacher's mind. Both Bazzini and he were struck by its freedom, its freshness, its general grip of the orchestra. It was performed at one of the Conservatory concerts, and Puccini's fame, heralded by the critic Filippi, who wrote in a special article in the *Perseveranza* about the first performance, travelled round Milan. It is interesting to read what Filippi said about the first serious work by the future hope, operatically speaking, of young Italy :

"Puccini has decidedly a musical temperament, especially as a symphonist, having unity of style and personality of character. There are more of such qualities in this *Capriccio* than are found in most composers of to-day, thorough grasp of style, a quick sense of colour, an inventive genius. The ideas are bright, strong, effective. He is not concerned with uncertainties, but fills up his scheme with harmonic boldness, and knits the whole together logically and with perfect order."

This discerning writer goes on to speak of the skilful way in which the melodic material is worked up, and the general feeling for movement, states that it called forth the warmest enthusiasm, and dubs it by far the most promising work of that year.

Faccio, a well-known conductor, made arrangements to have it played at an orchestral concert, and Puccini wrote with joy and alacrity to his mother to arrange to have the parts copied, asking to have sent to him, without a moment's delay, twelve first violin parts, ten seconds, nine violas, eight cellos, and seven basses.

Flushed with his first real success Puccini was ready to act upon any suggestion that would enable him to keep the ball, once started, rolling along merrily. Ponchielli was struck with the essentially dramatic quality of Puccini's mind and bent, and promised to find him a suitable libretto so that he might start on an opera. He invited Puccini to spend a few days at his country villa at Caprino, and there Puccini met Fontana, who, like himself, was at the beginning of his career. After much cogitation, it was decided to collaborate in a short work, so that it might be ready for the Sozogno competition, the limit of time for that event having nearly expired. Thus it was that Fate, or Chance, settled the form in which, as it subsequently transpired, Puccini was from the very beginning to appear as a setter of fashion in opera. But, as we shall see, the path to fame did not immediately open to Puccini. The Sozogno prize was not won, but *Le Villi*, his first opera, was born, and, like Wagner, the ardent and now well-equipped young composer began to experience those pains and penalties, and bravely ploughed his way through thorns and over the rough places, and finally conquered by the sheer force of perseverance, endurance, and singleness of aim.



PUCCINI AND FONTANA, THE LIBRETTIST, AT THE TIME OF
THE PRODUCTION OF "LE VILLI," 1884

III

THE PUCCINI OF YESTERDAY AND TO-DAY

PUCCINI, after the death of his beloved mother, sought consolation in hard work, and *Edgar* was written in Milan during a period, which was in like manner experienced by Wagner, of additional anxiety, brought about by the want of the actual means to live. But it is undoubtedly that out of such trials and troubles the best work of the brain is forged and brought to an achievement.

Puccini was living at this time in a poor quarter of Milan with his brother and another student. With the £80 he received for *Le Villi* he paid away nearly half of it to the restaurant keeper who had allowed him credit.

Milan, the chief operatic centre of opera-loving Italy, is full of music schools agencies, restaurants and cafés, whose reason for existence, practically, is found in the fact that half the population is in one way or another connected with the operatic stage. Milan is even more Bohemian than Paris in this respect, and it is not difficult to understand why the subject of unconventionality, as treated by Puccini in *La Bohème*, should have come to him

with such force. He had, in fact, gone through the whole thing completely, so far as living on nothing and making all sorts of shifts for existence were concerned. Milan's social atmosphere is almost completely that of theatrical Bohemianism, and all the students come very intimately into contact with its essence and spirit.

There are many little stories of Puccini in his early days, which, after all, only represent the common lot of many a struggling genius the wide world over. He and his companions at the time *Edgar* was in the process of making rented one little top room in the Via Solferino, for which, according to Puccini's friend Eugenio Checchi, who has recorded the history of these early days, they paid twenty-four shillings a month. Puccini kept a diary, which he called "Bohemian Life," in 1881. It was little more than a register of expenses. Coffee, bread, tobacco and milk appear to be the chief entries, and there is an entire absence of anything more substantial in the way of food. In one place there was a herring put down; and on this being brought to Puccini's recollection, he laughingly said: "Oh, yes, I remember. That was a supper for four people."

As will be seen in the chapter on *La Bohème*, this incident was made use of by the librettists in the third act of that opera.

From the Congregation of Charity at Rome, Puccini was in receipt at this time of £4 per month. The sum used to come in a registered letter on a certain day, and he and his companions usually had to suffer the landlord to open it and deduct, first, his share for the

rent. Many were the scenes they had with this worthy possessor of real estate. He had forbidden them to cook in the room, and even with the marvellously cheap restaurants, where at least the one national dish of spaghetti could be indulged in for the merest trifle, our group of young strugglers found it even cheaper to do their cooking at home. As the hour of a meal drew near, the landlord used to go into the next room, or prowl about the landing, to listen and to smell. The usual stratagem was to place the spirit lamp on the table and over it a dish in which to cook eggs. When the frizzling began, the others would call out to Puccini to play "like the very devil," and going over to the piano he would start on some wild strains which stopped when the modest omelette—two eggs between three—was ready to turn out.

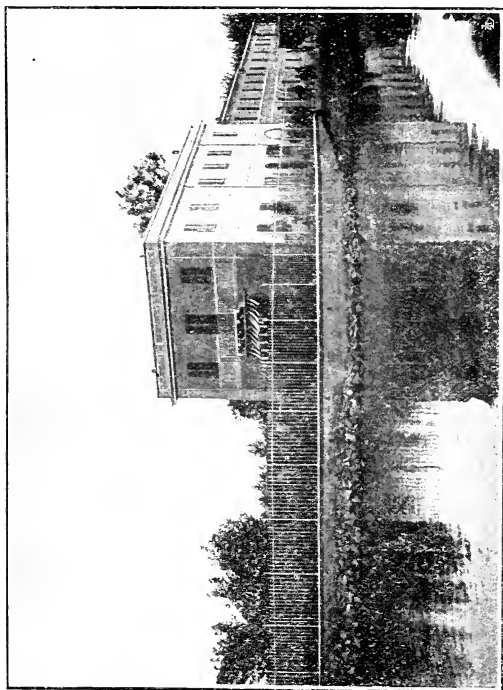
The material for firing was another source of expense. Their modest order did not warrant the coal-merchant sending up five flights of stairs to deliver it in whatever receptacle took the place of the usual cellar : so Michael Puccini, the brother, used to dress up in his best clothes, including a valuable relic in the shape of a "pot-hat," and take with him a black-bag. The others said, "Good-bye, bon voyage," with some effusion on the door-step to let the neighbours imagine he was going away for a visit ; and off Michael would go, to return in the dusk with the bag full of coal.

There is something infinitely pathetic in recording that Puccini, when fortune smiled upon him, wrote to this brother in great glee to tell him of the success of

Manon, and to say that he was able to buy the house in Lucca where they were born. But Michael, who had departed to South America to mend his own fortunes, was then lying dead of yellow fever, to which he had succumbed after three days' illness.

Edgar being completed, the work brought him in about six times the amount he had obtained for *Le Villi*, while with *Manon*, which followed, his position became practically assured for the future. Always of a shy, retiring disposition, he had often longed to get away from the cramped conditions of town life, and Torre del Lago, on a secluded lake not far from Lucca, lying in beautiful country, surrounded by woods, and connected by canals with the sea—into which it flows just by the spot where Shelley's body was washed ashore and afterwards burned—was an ideal spot to which his thoughts had often turned. He went there to reside first in 1891, about the time he was writing *La Bohème*; but some time before that he had found a partner of his joys in Elvira Bonturi, who, like himself, came from Lucca, and whom he married. Their only son, Antonio, was born in the December of 1886. It was not until 1900 that Puccini built the delightful villa at Torre del Lago to which he is so devotedly attached, and to which he always refers as a Paradise.

Before finally deciding on a site at Torre del Lago—the Tower of the Lake—Puccini stayed for a time at Castellaccio, near Pescia, where a good deal of *La Bohème* was put to paper. *Tosca* was begun at Torre del Lago, and finished during a visit at the



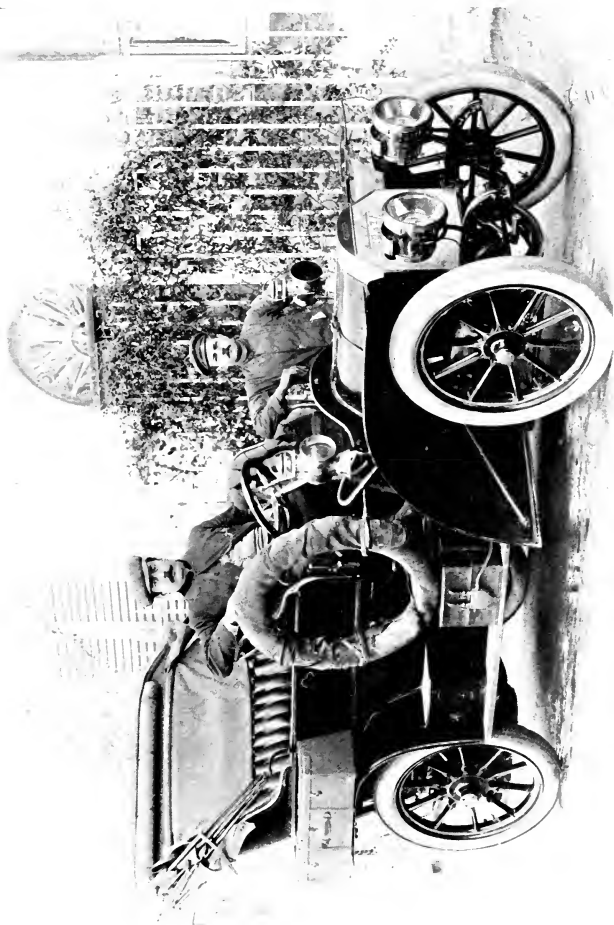
VILLA AT TORRE DEL LAGO

country house, Monsagrati, not far from Lucca, of his friend the Marquis Mansi. At the time of *Madama Butterfly* he was back at Torre del Lago, to which he was taken after his motor accident, but he was at this time the possessor of another country villa at Abetone, in the Tuscan Appenines, and in this latter place a good deal of his latest opera was set down. He has more recently built yet another country villa on the opposite side of the lake to Torre del Lago, on the Chiatri Hill. It is a charming example of the Florentine style of architecture, in which brick and marble are most skilfully blended. But Puccini told me, when last I saw him, that so far he had only spent a week-end in it.

Puccini, who was always addicted to sport and an open-air life, went in for motoring in the year 1901. His accident, by which he broke his leg and suffered a great deal of pain and anxiety owing to the difficulty of the uniting of the bone, took place in the February of 1903. He had left his beloved Torre del Lago and gone into Lucca for a change of air and place, owing to a bad cold and sore throat from which he could not get free. One of Puccini's characteristics is a certain obstinacy which very often leads him to do things in direct opposition to anything like a command. The fact that his doctor had told him not to go out in his car at night was sufficient, of course, for "Mr. James"—Puccini is invariably addressed by those round him as "Sor Giacomo"—to decide on a little evening trip; and he and his wife and son with the chauffeur started off in the country.

About five miles from Lucca there is a little place called Vignola, where is a sharp turn in the road by a bridge. Going at full speed, this was not noticed in the dark, and as the car turned, it went over an embankment and fell nearly thirty feet into a field. Mdme. Puccini and Antonio were unhurt, but the chauffeur had a fractured thigh and Puccini a fractured leg. Unfortunately, Puccini was pinned under the car, stunned and bruised by the fall; and, moreover, suffered considerably from the fumes of the petrol. A doctor, luckily, was staying at a cottage near by, and he was able to render first aid. Afterwards another doctor was sent for from Lucca, and it was decided to make a litter and carry Puccini to Torre del Lago by boat, as owing to the inflammation the leg was not able to be set immediately. Puccini's great friend, Marquis Ginori, went with him on the boat; and, although in great pain, the invalid found himself regretting that on the journey so many wild duck flew within range, just at the time, as he laughingly remarked, he could not shoot them. Three days after his arrival home, Colzi, a famous specialist from Florence, came and set the leg. The actual uniting of the bone was a long and tedious process, which spread over eight months, and Puccini was not really able to walk again properly until he had been to Paris—where his *Tosca* was produced at the Opera Comique—and undergone a special treatment at the hands of a French specialist. His first visit to Paris had been in 1898 for the rehearsals of *La Bohème*.

Puccini visited London for the first time when he



PUCINI IN HIS 24-H.P. "LA BUIRE"
Photo. by R. de Gull & Co., Lucca

came over for the production of *Manon* at Covent Garden in 1894. He came again in 1897 for the production in English of *La Bohème* at Manchester by the Carl Rosa Company. This was not, by all accounts, one of his most pleasant visits to a country of which he is very fond. Apart from the nervous worry of a first performance of a brand new work in a strange language, there were difficulties which made it a peculiarly trying time for the composer. Robert Cuninghame, the Rodolfo, was unfortunately seized with a fearful cold which made him practically speechless on the night of the performance, and he could do no more than whisper his part. All things considered, it is not to be wondered at that Puccini, after spending nearly three weeks in rehearsal, decided to keep away from the theatre on the eventful night. He has himself written down his impressions of Manchester, as well as those of London and Paris.

“Manchester, land of the smoke, cold, fog, rain and—cotton!

“London has six million inhabitants, a movement which it is as impossible to describe as the language is to acquire. A city of splendid women, beautiful amusements, and altogether fascinating.

“In Paris, the gay city, there is less traffic than in London, but life there flies. My chief friends were Zola, Sardou and Daudet.”

It was when Puccini was in Paris for the production of *La Bohème* that he first met Sardou and arranged about the setting of *La Tosca*. Sardou invited him to dinner, and after the coffee and cigars asked him to

play a little of the music he thought of putting in the new opera. Sardou's knowledge of music, by the way, has, to say the least of it, its limitations, and Puccini is very loth to play anything he may have in his mind in the way of a composition. Puccini sat down at the piano, however, and played a good deal, which Sardou liked immensely. But Sardou did not know that the composer was merely stringing together all sorts of odd airs out of his previous operas.

Puccini's days at his beloved Torre del Lago are divided between sport and work. The beginning of his house, by the way, was a keeper's lodge, a mere hut, on the edge of the wood. It is so white that in the distance it looks like marble, but as a building it is quite unpretentious. There is a little garden leading down to the lake, while at the back stretches the fine open country. He is usually up and away early in the morning, accompanied by his two favourite dogs, "Lea" and "Scarpia." He goes to and fro from his shoots in his motor-boat "Butterfly." The place abounds with wild duck, wild swans and all sorts of water-fowl, the principal quarry from the sportsman's point of view being coots, hares, and wild boar. Puccini has been frequently snowed up while away shooting as late as April.

To the south of the lake, in the plain, are some remains of a bath attributed to Nero, with undoubted traces of a Roman road and a fosse. One can hardly move a yard in Italy without coming across villas of Lucullus, roads of Hannibal, or fields of Cataline, but this particular place, not only from the traces of build-

ings which remain, but from the result of excavation, by which many Roman remains were brought to light, is of great antiquity.

Coming in from a "shoot" Puccini often allows the best part of the day to pass in more or less what seems like idleness, preferring to put down his music at night—the one relic, one may say, of his old wayward restless ways. He works chiefly on the ground floor of his house at Torre del Lago, in a spacious apartment which is a sort of dining-room, study and music-room all in one. The ceiling is crossed with large wooden beams, and he calls the Venetian blinds, which are outside the many and large windows, "mutes" for the sun, using the word, of course, in its sense of a device for softening the tone of a musical instrument. The walls of the room are decorated with some quick impulsive designs, dashed on by his friend the artist Nomellini, representing the flight of the hours from dawn to night. For the rest, the room is full of photographs of all sorts of distinguished people, from Verdi downwards, and stuffed birds.

When the desire for work is upon Puccini, "it catches him," as an Italian would say, "by the scalp," and he works at a thing continuously. During the recovery from his motor accident he was wheeled to the piano each day and planned out *Madama Butterfly*, although the actual writing down of the melodies and the general work of construction was done, of course, away from the instrument. He makes a rough sketch of the whole score as a rule, which he subjects to all sorts of weird alterations only intelligible to himself,

and from this makes a clean copy embodying all the process of polishing and finishing to which the original idea was subjected.

It is difficult to get from Puccini any particulars of his ideas and aims. He much prefers to do things rather than to talk about them. He has on one or two occasions, however, given a hint of his views which may be worth putting down again. One is on the interesting question as to dramatic instinct in music. Puccini maintains that it is a question not of instinct but experience. He says himself that his early works were lacking in dramatic quality, but he does not agree that if it is not inborn it cannot be developed. He maintains that the choice of librettos has more to do with it than anything else, and from the first he has worked a good deal in this way by more than the usual amount of consultation and exchange of ideas that goes on between a composer and the writer of the book. Marie Antoinette, at the time when I had the pleasure of talking with him, was the subject for an opera which was, at least, uppermost in his mind. "But I have thought of many subjects and stories," he said. "La Faute de l'Abbé Mouret and the Tartarin of Daudet are two well-known ones. The latter is pure fun, but I have always thought, when coming to the point, that I should be accused, if I set it, of copying Verdi's *Falstaff*. The former, I believe, Zola promised to Massenet. I have also thought of Trilby; and several excellent themes for plots could be gathered from the stories of the later Roman Emperors." One



PUCCINI AFTER A "SHOOT"
Photo. by S. Ernesto Arbore

statement at least was very characteristic of Puccini. "My next plot must be one of sentiment to allow me to work in my own way. I am determined not to go beyond the place in art where I find myself at home."

Puccini is very fond of the theatre, and when last in London enjoyed the production of *Oliver Twist*—he is specially fond, in our literature, of Dickens—and *The Tempest*.

IV

“ LE VILLI ”

THE Dal Verme Theatre, where Puccini's first opera was produced, has been the scene of many experiments in the art of opera. More than one composer has been able to get a hearing there, if no more, and among the list of trials and experiments—the value of which taken as a whole will doubtless some day be accounted at their proper worth, and which still come out like shades of the night to remind us how little we appreciate native endeavour—are to be found the names of more than one English composer. Among the notable successes which have been first launched at this theatre is Leoncavallo's *I Pagliacci*.

The cast and general production of *Le Villi*, as has been mentioned, was apparently more or less in the nature of a friendly “helping hand” held out to the unknown composer. The first performance was on May 31, 1884, and the cast as follows :

<i>Anna</i>	CAPONETTI.
<i>Roberto</i>	D'ANDRADE.
<i>Guglielmo Wulf</i>	PELZ.

When one thinks of modern extravagance, supposedly so necessary for the production of a new play or musical

piece, it is little short of amazing to learn that the first performance of *Le Villi* cost a little over £20. Of course the main expenses were the costumes and the copying of the orchestral parts. Puccini's fellow-students, with that generous enthusiasm which is ever part of the artistic temperament, cheerfully swelled the ranks of the theatre orchestra, and Messrs. Ricordi printed the libretto for nothing.

Le Villi met with a favourable verdict, and Puccini's mother received the following telegram on the night of its production: "Theatre packed, immense success; anticipations exceeded; eighteen calls; finale of first act encored thrice."

The outcome of it all was that Messrs. Ricordi not only bought the opera, but commissioned Puccini to write another, thus beginning an association which has not only been marked by commercial success but by a very real and close friendship.

The following year it was given in a slightly revised version, divided into two acts, at the Scala, Milan, that Temple of Operatic Art which is the Mecca of every aspiring Italian musician. This performance took place on January 24, and was conducted by Faccio, the cast being Pantaleoni, Anton, and Menotti. It was not published by Ricordi until 1897, when it appeared with an English version of Fontana's libretto by Percy Pinkerton. In this year it was done at Manchester, at the Comedy Theatre, by Mr. Arthur Rousby's company, Mrs. Arthur Rousby being the Anna, Mr. Henry Beaumont the Roberto, and Mr. Frank Land the Wulf. Mr. Edgardo Levi conducted.

Fontana's story was a curious one to be dealt with by a Southern poet ; for the basis of *Le Villi* is found in one of those curious Northern legends which seem to be the exclusive property of natures of far sterner mould. The Villis, or witch-dancers, are spirits of damsels who have been betrothed and whose lovers have proved false. Garbed in their bridal gowns, they rise from the earth at midnight and dance in a sort of frenzy, till the dawn puts an end to their weird revelry. Should they happen to meet one of their faithless lovers, they beguile him into their circle with fair promises ; but, like the sirens of old mythology, they do so only to take their revenge ; for once within their magic ring, the unrestful spirits whirl their victim round and round until his strength is exhausted, and then in fiendish exultation leave him to die in expiation of his broken vows.

The scene of *Le Villi* is laid in the Black Forest. An open clearing shows us the cottage of Wulf, behind which a pathway leads to some rocks above, half hidden by trees. A rustic bridge spans a defile, and the exterior of the cottage is decorated with spring flowers for the festival of betrothal. With this, his first opera, Puccini adopted the Wagnerian plan which he has since always adhered to, of a prelude introduction, indicative of the general atmosphere of the drama to follow, in place of the conventional overture. As the curtain rises, Wulf, Anna and Roberto are seated at a table outside the cottage, and the chorus hail the betrothed pair in a joyful measure. As the lovers move off to the back, the chorus tells something

of the prospects of the two young people. Roberto is the heir of a wealthy lady in Mayence. He will have to visit her for the arrangement of the details of his inheritance, and will then return to wed the bride. The chorus then sings a characteristic waltz measure, whirling and turning and singing that the dance is the rival of love. It is a quick impulsive measure in A minor, and foreshadows in a clever way the weird dance which later on plays such an important part in the scheme. Guglielmo, the father, is asked to join in the dance, and he does so after a short instrumental passage leading back to the dance and chorus proper. Guglielmo dances off with his partner and the stage is clear.

Anna comes down alone as the orchestra finish off the rhythmic figure of the waltz. She holds a bunch of forget-me-nots in her hand, and sings of remembrance in a characteristic melody which at once reveals Puccini's individuality both in melody and structure. It varies considerably in the time, and has all that impulsive charm of movement with which Puccini always fits the situation and the sentiment. In actual structure the melody moves along in flowing vocal phrases, but they invariably drop on to an unexpected note and reveal thereby that piquancy of flavour which makes them singularly attractive. Anna is putting the bunch of flowers, the token of remembrance, in Roberto's valise when her lover comes in. Taking the little bunch he kisses it and puts it back, and then begs a token more fair—a smile. A characteristic duet then follows, in which Anna gives expression to the doubts

she feels at her lover's enforced absence. A delightfully suave second section is sung by Roberto, in which he tells her of his love, strong and unending, born in the happy days of childhood. Anna catches the spirit of his fervent devotion, and the duet ends with their voices blending in a song of triumphant trust. The voices end together on a low note, but the orchestra carries the melody up to a high C by way of a climax, and then gives out a bell-like sound skilfully preceded by a chord of that somewhat abrupt modulation in which Puccini always delights, which portends the approach of night and the departure of Roberto. This bell-like note of warning comes in again during the short interlude which leads to the chorus, who return to sing of Roberto's departure ere the bright beams of sunset fade in the western sky.

Roberto bids Anna to be courageous, and asks her father's blessing. Slow and solemn chords usher in Guglielmo's touching prayer, in which after the opening phrases the lovers join their voices, repeating the sentiment of his pious utterances. Towards the end the full chorus is added to the trio; and this solidly written number, backed by a moving orchestral figure, ends impressively. Anna sings her sad farewell, the voice rising to a characteristic high A, and a short orchestral passage finishes the scene.

The second act is headed "Forsaken" in the score, and to the opening prelude is attached a short note explanatory of what has happened in the meanwhile. "In those days there was in Mayence a siren, who bewitched all who beheld her, old and young." Like

the presiding spirit of the Venusberg who held Tannhäuser in thrall, so Roberto is attracted to her unholy orgies and Anna is forgotten. Worn out by grief and hopeless longing Anna dies, and in the opening chorus of the second act we learn that she lies on her bier, her features of marble paler than the moonlight. An expressive and solemn funeral march, the main theme of which is indicated by this preceding chorus, is then played by the orchestra, during which the funeral procession leaves Guglielmo's house and passes across the stage. In order to add to the air of mystery this is directed to be done behind a veil of gauze. At the end, a three-part chorus of female voices chants a phrase of the *Requiescat*. The tableaux curtains are dropped for a change of scene. The place is the same, but the time is winter, and the gaunt trees are snow laden. The night is clear and starry, and pulsing lights flash from the sides, adding their lurid and fitful brilliance to the calm cold light of the moon.

With a sharp detached full chord in G minor, the weird unearthly dance begins in quick duple time, the quaint rhythmic melody being composed of staccato triplets. Out of the darkness the figures of the witch-dancers appear and join in the dance as the frenzy increases. It is a highly characteristic movement, and one can hardly agree with the critic who on its first production, as will be seen hereafter, wished that it might be in the major key. For an uncanny, utterly restless and grim effect, most subtly presented by means of purely legitimate music, this number stands as an exceptionally fine example. The dance ends, and

the witch-dancers are swallowed up in the darkness, while Guglielmo comes out to dwell on the villainy of Roberto and the cruel wrong done to his dead child. The prelude to his plaintive number is prefaced with a striking descending passage for the chorus. As he sings of the pure and gentle soul of his daughter, the legend of the witch-dancers comes into his mind, but at once he prays for forgiveness for such unworthy thoughts of vengeance.

From a passage for the hidden voices of the sopranos we expect the approach of Roberto. The recalcitrant lover is startled by the sounds he hears, but he thinks remorse, and not the Villis of the legend, is the cause of it. Into his mind there flashes the remembrance of all that has passed, and he goes towards the cottage-door with a pathetic hope that Anna may still be living. But he starts back as some irresistible force compels him to retreat. Again he thinks a wild fancy has deceived him, but once more the voices sound the note of approaching doom. "See the traitor is coming." He kneels in prayer, but at the end comes in the sinister phrase, "See the traitor is coming." He rises from his prayer to curse the evil influence that has wrought his destruction.

Then, at the back, on the bridge, appears the spirit of Anna. Amazed, Roberto exclaims, "She is living, not dead!" but Anna replies that she is not his love but revenge, and reminds him, by a repetition of her solo in the first act, when she sang to the bunch of forget-me-nots, of all his broken promises. Roberto joins in this strenuous and moving duet, and accepts

with resignation the fate that has been too strong for him. Torn with the anguish of remorse he expresses his willingness to die. Anna holds out her arms, and Roberto seems hypnotised. Gradually the witch-dancers come on, and surrounding the pair dance once more in frenzy row carry them off. Over the characteristic dance is now placed a full chorus. The words “whirling, turning,” which frequently occur as the movement gains in intensity, show the connection with the joyous measure in the first act. In this we find one of those effects of unity which, although slight enough in many cases, reveal the hand, if not exactly of a great master, of an original thinker and a particularly finished craftsman. Roberto, at the end of the main section of the chorus, ending on a long sustained top A, and then dropping sharply to the tonic (it is still as before in G minor), breaks away breathless and terrified and strives to enter the cottage; but the spirits drive him again into the arms of Anna, and once more he is drawn into the whirlpool. With a last despairing shriek, “Anna, save me!” he dies; and Anna, with an exultant cry of possession, vanishes, while the chorus change the words of their song to a shout of exultation.

By this first effort, slight in texture as it is, Puccini gave unmistakable evidence of that power of giving, by a series of detached scenes, an idea of impressionistic atmospheric quality which was afterwards so beautifully achieved in his *La Bohème*. From the criticism of Sala, who, as we saw in a preceding chapter, was present at the meeting at Ponchielli's

house which led to the production of the opera, we get a sound idea of the general effect and trend of the music, which is worth quoting. It appeared in *Italia* of the day after the performance, at which, it may be mentioned, Boïto applauded vigorously from a box.

"It is, according to our judgment, a precious little gem, from beginning to end. The prelude, not meant to be important, is full of delicate instrumental passages, and contains the theme afterwards used in the first duet between the lovers. The chorus which follows is gay and festive and shows masterly handling of the parts: the waltz, which we should have preferred in a major key, is entrancing, one of the most characteristic numbers of the opera is the duet between Anna and Roberto. The prayer of benediction is another inspired page, in spite of its length. The polyphony of the vocal parts is masterly and the melodic flow most charming. The symphonic nature of the intermezzi which connect the scenes, more particularly the wild dance of the spirit forms, distinctly points to the arrival of a great composer."

While the salient points of the music appear to have been unerringly seized upon by the writer, the subtlety of the composer in making the first dance of the peasants foreshadow the furious revelry of the witch-dancers appears to have escaped the critic. But this desire for strongly marked effects is after all essentially typical of the race. In Italy, the clear, radiant sky, the pure air, the glorious strength of the light, does not permit of an appreciation for half-tones and the

fascination of shadows. If all need not exactly be dazzlingly bright it must be quite distinct. *Le Villi* was a remarkable first opera, but it has not succeeded in keeping a place in the current repertory. The music is unquestionably dramatic, but the whole structure, words and music, has not that quality of characterisation which, together with the necessary dramatic force, makes up the theatrical effectiveness without which no opera can ever expect to hold the stage. To use a hackneyed phrase, *Le Villi* has the defects of its qualities, but from the freshness and individuality of its music there is no reason why it should not be given in our concert-rooms as a cantata. The dance movement, after all, would lose nothing by being given as an orchestral piece, and the spirit forms might well be left to the imagination. At any rate, *Le Villi* is, by a very long way, a far greater work than many a so-called “dramatic” cantata. These things take the place in our provincial towns of the opera abroad; and since we do not appear in the least likely to establish opera houses, it would be a good plan for the British composer to take Puccini’s *Le Villi* as an example of what might be done with a cantata—an opera, after all, played without action or scenery.

V

“ EDGAR ”

WITH his second work for the stage, *Edgar*—the libretto being by Fontana, the author of the opera-ballet *Le Villi*—Puccini adopts the designation of lyric drama. *Edgar* is in three acts, and with it the composer attained to the dignity of a first performance at the Scala, Milan. It saw the light on April 21, 1889, with the following cast, the conductor being Faccio :

<i>Edgar</i>	GABRIELESKO.
<i>Gualtiero</i>	MARINI.
<i>Frank</i>	MAGINI COLETTI.
<i>Fidelia</i>	AURELIA CATAREO.
<i>Tigrana</i>	ROMEIDA PANTALEONE.

The vocal score was not published by Ricordi until 1905.

The theme of the drama is the familiar one of a man tempted by passion, who swerves from the “strait and narrow path,” and who afterwards makes atonement. In the case of our hero, Edgar, the atonement comes too late, and the end, as in *Carmen*—which in general dramatic outline may be called the foremost if not the first operatic exploitation of the idea—is Tragedy.



Puccini in his study at Torre del Lago

In front of his book Fontana places a foreword to the effect that we are all Edgars, because fate brings to each of us love and death. He winds up with a moral statement, true if trite, that it is wrong to let ourselves be dragged away from pure love to mere sensual passion.

The action takes place in Flanders in the early fourteenth century. The scene of the first of the three acts shows us a square in a Flemish village, at the back of which is Edgar's house, and before it an almond tree. On the one side is the entrance to a church, on the other an inn.

Over the distant landscape dawn is breaking. With a bell effect, of which Puccini is so fond, the simple prelude begins. The plain and straightforward progression of light chords is French in character, but the bell effect is established musically by the simple leap of a fifth in the bass. The chords continue, with a filagree figure placed above them, and from delicate musical suggestion the effect turns to realism as the bell itself sounds, ushering in the notes of the unseen chorus, as the Angelus rings from the church.

Edgar is asleep on a bench before the inn, and peasants and shepherds cross the stage, greeting each other as they go to their daily toil. Fidelia, the daughter of Gualtierio, then comes on to the balcony and salutes the dawn in a characteristic melody which, although not based on the bell theme in the way of the use of a representative phrase, seems very naturally to grow out of the musical idea. She calls to Edgar and comes down, plucking a branch from the almond

tree. Fidelia continues her address to Edgar in a melody which is much more broken in rhythm than her former one; and on her departure a curious chromatic passage, which seems to presage unrest and stress, leads to the entry of the chorus, who repeat, from afar but coming nearer, their greeting to the dawn, while Edgar turns to go after Fidelia.

Strongly dramatic and of distinctive colour is the orchestral passage which accompanies the entrance of Tigrana. She is a gipsy girl, who has been brought up by the villagers. She enters with a species of lute—or guitar, more properly perhaps—called the dembal, a stringed instrument in common use even now by descendants of the Magyar race. She laughs at Edgar with a fine scorn of his tame admiration for the gentle village damsel. “There! I have made Fidelia run away,” she sings with a mixture of sarcasm, irony, and hypocrisy. “I am so sorry. I did not know a pastoral love affair was at all in your way.”

Gualtieri, Fidelia’s father, now comes on, and, with the gathering crowd of villagers, enters the church. The beginning of the voluntary on the organ is heard, and over and above this simple diatonic, ecclesiastical tune, come, in skilful and expressive contrast, the remarks of the gipsy girl to Edgar, by which she reminds him that she has opened to his nature the delights of an intense full-blooded love in place of the mildly innocuous affection of peasant girls. “Trot along, good little boy,” she sings, “and go to church.” Edgar’s feeling about the matter is quickly shown by his emphatic “Silence, demon!” which comes out

like the crack of a whip. But Tigrana only laughs at him.

As Tigrana turns to go into the inn she is stopped by Frank, the brother of Fidelia. Frank is in love with the gipsy girl, and from him we learn that fifteen years ago she was abandoned in the village. Questioned as to her doings, Tigrana tells Frank that he is a tiresome bore, while he proceeds with the not very tactful method of reproaching her for her ingratitude. “You were the child of us all,” he sings, “and we did not know we were nursing a viper in our midst.”

Tigrana, who is not given to wasting much time with preliminaries, tells Frank that if he has any regard for his virtue he had better not be seen talking to her; and she goes towards the inn. Frank bursts out with the confession that he has tried to tear her out of his heart, but although she brings nothing but grief to him she remains there in full possession.

From the church comes the sound of a fragment of a motet, begun by the sopranos and swelling out afterwards in a six-part chorus. Tigrana sits on the table outside the inn and jeers at the piety of those peasants who, not being able to find room in the church, kneel outside and join in the devotion. To her dembal she sings a quaint and springy sort of tune which is thoroughly impudent in character. With a murmur of disapproval, which afterwards grows into a demand, the peasants indignantly ask her to desist from her frivolity. As she proceeds with her melody the peasants threaten to take stronger measures to stop the interruption to their prayers, and Edgar, coming out, rushes

at once to Tigrana's defence. This open devotion to her cause apparently surprises the villagers greatly, and Edgar finds himself called upon at once to make up his somewhat vacillating mind. With rather curious and certainly sudden access of ardour, he rails against his lot, and curses the home of his fathers. Egged on to a species of frenzy, he rushes into the house and comes out bearing an ember from the hearth. In spite of the efforts of the villagers to restrain his mad impulse he flings the brand into the house, and clasping Tigrana to him, announces his intention of fleeing with her. Frank then rushes on to prevent their departure, and the two young men draw their daggers. A lull in the fray is caused by the entrance of Gualtierio and Fidelia from the church; and the old man's counsel for peace backed up by pious ejaculations from the crowd, seems likely at first to prevail. But Tigrana puts an end to Edgar's hesitation, and he attacks Frank with fury. Frank is badly wounded, and falls in his father's arms as the chorus curse Edgar for a reprobate, and the curtain falls as the house, now well ablaze, lights up the scene with its lurid glare.

The second act shows us a terrace in a garden with the brilliantly lighted rooms of a sumptuous mansion glimmering in the distance. The stillness of the night is broken by the sounds of revelry, more languorous than strident. The chorus, which sing of the splendour of the night, is made up of two sopranos, an alto, two tenors, and a bass; and the essentially nervous, close harmonies—the light detached phrase begins with a chord of the 13th—establish the atmosphere. There

is some fine and characteristic music in this rather long scene between Edgar and Tigrana, who have, it is easy to understand, been partaking too freely of the joys which soon pall. Edgar is weary of his enervating surroundings, and his thoughts turn to the glory of the April dawn and the calm love of Fidelia. Tigrana taunts him with reproaches, and there follow the inevitable mutual recriminations. In vain does she bring her fascinations to bear upon her lover. The sound of drums and the march of soldiers is heard, and Edgar calls out to them as they pass to stay their march and partake of his hospitality. Tigrana at once begins to be suspicious. Frank, as it turns out, is the captain of the band. Edgar hails him with joy as the saviour of the situation. “Frank, forgive me,” he cries. “You alone can save me and enable me to redeem my past.” Tigrana is distracted, but she is powerless to prevent Edgar’s departure, and with a menacing gesture she sees her lover go, a characteristic phrase from the chorus forming the background to the last utterances of the principals concerned in this short and not particularly convincing act.

The third act is prefaced with a short prelude of melancholy mould. The rising curtain discloses a courtyard within a fortress at Courtray. In the battle which raged round this castle, the Flemish, it will be remembered, with very few numbers—and these only armed with agricultural implements for the most part—conquered the French army led by Philip Le Bel. Their opponents were decoyed into a sort of marshy swamp, and were not only hampered by their large

retinue, which included carriages, women-kind, and all sorts of paraphernalia, but imagined that they were only to meet a handful of ignorant churls. There is a chapel on one side of the scene, and distant trumpet calls are heard as a funeral *cortège* proceeds to range itself around a hearse, and the monks in the procession light tapers.

Preceded by a draped banner, the soldiers bear on the body of a knight, fully armed, which they place on the hearse and then deck it with flowers and wreaths. Standing apart from the crowd are Frank and a monk, while in the background are seen Fidelia and her father. The chorus chant a *Requiescat*, and then Fidelia sings a most moving and pathetic farewell, for the armed knight is Edgar. It may be stated, however, that the monk who stands apart is really Edgar, who, for no very clear or convincing reason, has chosen to be a witness of his supposed funeral celebration.

Frank now adds his praise to the farewell of Fidelia, and extols in an oration the splendid courage of the man Edgar who died for his fatherland. Then the monk does a seemingly strange and unwarrantable thing. He tells the soldiers that their hero, before death, directed that all his misdeeds should be proclaimed publicly, in order that his life might set an example in true penitence. The monk then relates the story of Edgar's past life, and discloses among other details the relations existing between the dead man and Tigrana.

Fidelia, filled with horror at the supposed treachery, boldly asks how the soldiers dare to listen to this



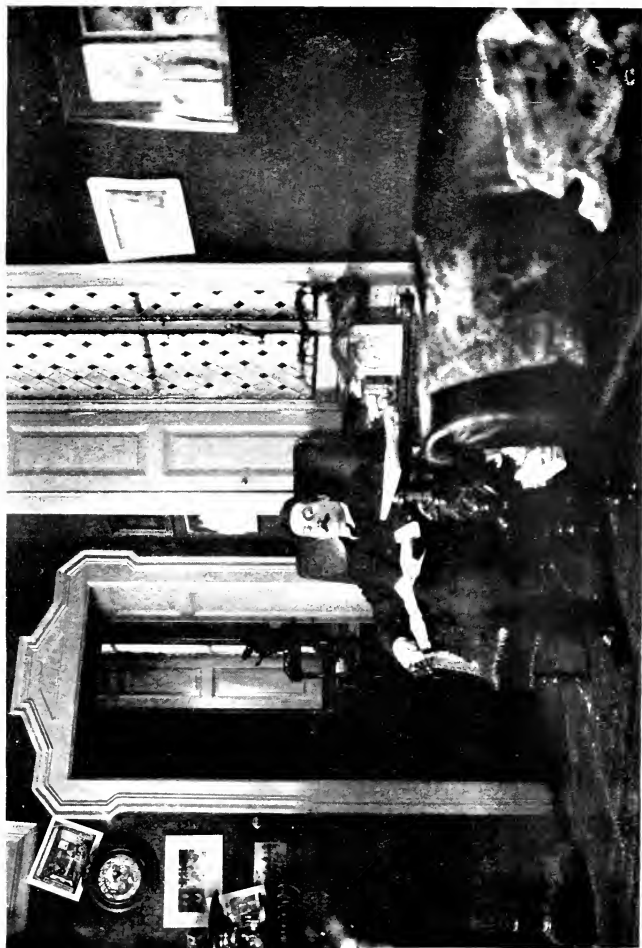
Specially photographed by Adobe-Forman, Milan

besmirching of their leader's honour. The soldiers, however, appear to believe the tale, and make an attempt to drag the body off to throw it to the vultures. The monk is touched by the loyalty of Fidelia, who is prepared to defend, with her life if needs be, the body of her hero. “By death,” she cries, “he has expiated his sins. Leave me to watch him through the night, and my father and I will bear his body away in the morning and find for it some resting-place in his native village.” The monk then kneels for a space by Fidelia; and the soldiers, touched by her devotion, move off, and Fidelia leaves with her father.

Tigrana now enters, and, like Fidelia, would pay her tribute of respect to the dead man. Frank and the monk, however, after a little consultation, put a little plan of theirs into operation, and approach Tigrana. “Would that I were the object of your grief,” says Frank. “One tear of yours is worth a thousand pearls.” The monk then comes out with some rather plainer speaking, and deliberately bribes the erstwhile gipsy with some jewels if she will do their bidding. Tigrana very readily falls into the trap and the soldiers are recalled. The monk now calls on Tigrana to speak out, and prove that Edgar was a traitor to his country. She hesitates for a moment, but finally acknowledges that the accusation is true. In righteous anger the soldiers rush to the hearse and drag the body away, but the armour is found to be merely the empty pieces and no body is encased therein. Fidelia and her father now come on, and the fraud is disclosed to them. “Yes,” cries the monk, throwing back his

cowl, "for Edgar lives." Fidelia, at first stunned by the joyful discovery that her lover lives, throws herself into his arms, and Tigrana is spurned by the soldiers. With an exclamation, "I am redeemed, only love is the real truth," Edgar leads Fidelia towards the castle. Like a tiger cat, Tigrana follows them, and with a savage leap stabs Fidelia, who dies instantly. Edgar and Frank turn and seize the murderess, and and the soldiers, with a bloodthirsty cry, hale her off to instant execution. With a cry of despair Edgar falls senseless across Fidelia's body.

Notwithstanding many serious shortcomings, *Edgar*, as a lyric drama, contains much that is sincere and appropriate. It was not a success on its first representation, and the blame was laid for the most part on the libretto. Seeing, however, in the history of opera how many a worse book has passed muster, it is a little curious that Puccini's second work should have been so completely laid on the shelf. It is not the lack of dramatic qualities that make the story of *Edgar* a poor one; it is rather that the story, as a play, does not contain enough of characterisation to really retain the interest. In spite of the weak third act, with its supposed dead body, and the hero in disguise, the music of this section, both from its wealth of melody, its treatment, and above all its powerful expressive qualities, stands as the best in the work. A finer or more moving scene than that of Fidelia's farewell is hardly to be found in the whole range of what may be termed modern opera. Taken as it stands *Edgar* proved that Puccini had emphatically progressed



PUCCHINI IN HIS MILAN HOUSE
Specialty photographed by Adolfo Fumini, Milan.

beyond his achievement of *Le Villi*. Amid the sweet notes of love there come strong and virile expressions of anger, tumult and indignation, but the main theme is kept clearly to the front with all that force that stands as the leading characteristic of Italian opera, old or new—definite and direct vocal expression.

Puccini himself had, and still has by all accounts, a very warm affection for this *Edgar* of his ; and it is not at all unlikely that a revised version may be seen in the near future. Indeed, as it stands, it might very well be permitted the test of a revival.

VI

“MANON”

AUBER was the first opera-composer to be attracted by the Abbé Prévost's famous romance *Manon Lescaut*. It is one of those vivid stories of love and passion which have ever made an appeal to those in search of a theme for musical expression. As drama it has a very close connection with life in general, and its human interest has that full flesh-and-blood quality which gives it a certain quick vitality. Sad and sordid it may be ; but the story of the wayward Manon, as fascinating a black sheep as ever graced the pages of fiction—or history—is one which is likely to remain in the common stock of tales which provides novelists with material for practically all time.

The chief romances of the Abbé are the *Mémoires d'un Homme de Qualité*, *Cleveland*, and *Doyen de Killerine* (the two latter, by the way, books which show the result of his sojourn in England). While these exhibit certain well-marked qualities, they are completely cast into the shade by *Manon Lescaut*, his masterpiece, and one of the greatest novels of the eighteenth century, while, from its characterisation, it may be pointed to as the father of the modern novel. The Chevalier des

Handwritten musical score for a symphony, featuring staves for various instruments and vocal parts. The score includes musical notation, lyrics, and performance instructions. The instruments listed on the left include Flauto (Flute), Oboe, Cori Inglese (English Horn), Clarinet, Fagotti (Bassoons), Contrabbasso (Double Bass), Corni (Horns), Trombe (Trumpets), Tamburi (Tambourines), Timpani, Cantastanti (Singers), Cassa e Fagotti (Cello and Double Bass), Violino (Violin), Viola, Cello, and Contrabbasso (Double Bass). The lyrics are written in Italian, and the score is marked with various musical notations such as notes, rests, and dynamic markings.

Griex is an embodiment of the saying "Love first and the rest nowhere," and it is curious that the Abbé made a French translation of Dryden's once famous play on the same theme, *All for Love*. Manon, as a creation, is a triumph, one of the most remarkable heroines in fiction, springing red-hot as it were from the imagination of the wandering scholar who brought her into existence. It is all the more extraordinary that the novel which at once makes an appeal by its interest and sincerity, but which repays study as a work of art, should have been a sort of appendix to his first work.

Some years after Auber's opera had been laid on the shelf—it never attained to any great popularity—Massenet, a notable "modern" French composer, found by means of its story the expression of quite the best that was in him. Since *Carmen* modern French opera has no such masterpiece of its kind to show. Massenet's *Manon* was produced in 1884, and in the fulness of time Puccini turned to the same story, and after planning his own *scenario*, commissioned Domenico Oliva—dramatic critic of the *Journal d'Italia* of Rome, and author of a play *Robespierre* which had attained no little success—to write the "book." This was afterwards so drastically altered and remodelled by Puccini, in consultation with Ricordi, the publisher, that in justice to Oliva, his name as the author of the libretto was removed from the published score.

It was produced in 1893 at the Regio Theatre, Turin, on the 1st of February, conducted by Alexander Pomé, and cast as follows :

<i>Manon</i>	.	.	.	.	.	FERRANI.
<i>The Dancing Master</i>	.	.	.	.	.	CERESOLI.
<i>Des Grieux</i>	.	.	.	.	.	CREMONINI.
<i>Lescaut</i>	.	.	.	.	.	MORO.
<i>Geronte</i>	.	.	.	.	.	POLONINI.
<i>Edmund</i>	.	.	.	.	.	RASSINI.

For a new work by a composer whose reputation at that time, much to the wonderment of native judges and musicians, had not traversed beyond Italy, its production in England was remarkably quick. It was given the next year, on May 14, 1894, at Covent Garden with the following cast, comprising a special company of Italian singers brought together by Messrs. Ricordi, of which the exceptionally fresh chorus appears to have been the chief point of excellence :

<i>Manon</i>	.	.	.	.	.	OLGHINA.
<i>Des Grieux</i>	.	.	.	.	.	BEDUSCHI.
<i>Lescaut</i>	.	.	.	.	.	PINI-CORSI.
<i>Geronte</i>	.	.	.	.	.	ARIMONDI.

and A. Seppilli was the conductor. The occasion was interesting in more than one way. The season under Sir Augustus Harris began on the very unusual day—a Whit-Monday. The opera house had been renovated entirely and re-upholstered, with new seats and curtains, and glittered fresh in all the glories of paint and gilding. Tradition has it that this was the only time in forty years—since the building of the present house in fact—had a broom ever been known to go into every corner. Yet another point makes this opening of the season memorable. It began with this new opera of Puccini's, and then gave Verdi's *Falstaff* the same week.

Without making an “odious” comparison it is obvious that reference should be made to Massenet’s work and the differences between that and Puccini’s opera briefly touched upon.

In both versions certain departures are made, so far as the story goes, from the original tale. Let us first examine Massenet’s book. This opens in the courtyard of an inn at Amiens to which Lescaut, a soldier who is evidently given to loose living, brings his pretty little sister Manon *en route* for the convent school to which she is destined. She meets with the handsome Chevalier des Grieux, and easily falls in love with him. The quiet life of schoolroom and convent does not make a very strong appeal to the high-spirited girl, and she very quickly decides to run away to Paris, and give her brother the slip. At first honourable intentions as to the pretty and confiding Manon’s future seem to weigh with the lover, but in the second act we find them installed in the customary *ménage à deux*, Des Grieux’s father having declined to give his consent to a marriage. Thus almost at the beginning Fate seems to be against Manon, and she accepts only too easily the situation and—drifts. Des Grieux’s “sinews of war” being anything but opulent, it is easy to understand why the offers of the aristocrat De Bretigny are too tempting for Manon to refuse. To him she transfers her affections, and we next see her established at Cours-la-Reine, the fêted and admired mistress of Bretigny. But during the ball she hears that her former lover has renounced the world with its pomps and vanities and is preparing to take orders.

With that instinct known as the truly feminine, Manon immediately makes up her mind that she wants Des Grieux back again ; and after a strenuous scene at the seminary of S. Sulpice we find, in the third act, that Des Grieux has thrown his good resolutions to the winds and is again with his charmer. Manon by this time has become rather more than a fragile butterfly from whose wings the bloom has been brushed. She is now running a gambling den, with the help, apparently, of one of her numerous admirers. Des Grieux and this person come to loggerheads, and the latter informs the police of the nature of the gaming house, and Manon is ignominiously dragged off to the lock-up. The last scene shows us Manon being taken by road to Havre, from whence she is to be shipped, in company with other undesirables, to the New Continent. Des Grieux sees her, and begs the warder to allow him an interview. Worn out by remorse and weakened by her former life, Manon, now reduced to the last stage of infirmity, dies peacefully in her lover's arms.

Puccini's librettists follow a different plan, and the *Manon* of the Italian composer is a species of impressionistic scenes more or less loosely strung together, which, while they demand perhaps a knowledge of the story for their full appreciation—and to opera goers the story is, of course, quite familiar—exhibit that quality of conjuring up the atmosphere not so much of the actual place and characters, but of the spirit which underlies the pathetic tragedy. In short, Puccini's *Manon*—music and story, for it is impossible to separate them—exhibits that skilful picturing of the

theme which is even more apparent in the subsequent work, *La Bohème*."

In Puccini's opera we find after the meeting of Manon and Des Grieux at the inn at Amiens that the gay young lady is installed as the mistress of Geronte, and rather less stress, perhaps, is laid on the part her rascally brother plays in the transaction. By giving the final scene in America, whither Des Grieux follows the ruined girl, Puccini's librettists follow the Abbe's original story rather more closely. Other actual differences will be noted by following the plan, as in the previous chapters, of giving a more or less detailed story of the opera, with plot and music side-by-side.

Puccini begins his *Manon* with a short, bustling, vivacious prelude which continues for some twenty bars or so after the rise of the curtain, which discloses, as in Massenet's first act, the exterior of an inn at Amiens, with a crowd of citizens, students and girls, strolling about the square and the avenue. One of the students, Edmund, sings of the beautiful night dear to lovers and poets, and the band of his merry companions cut his vapourings short with laughter and jest. Presently the work-girls come down, and Edmund sings to two of them a graceful, lively fantasy of youth and love, which is afterwards taken up by the chorus of students. In characteristic fashion, the citizens join in, and we get one of those solidly written but vivacious choruses, a form which Puccini handles so well and dexterously, with similar splendour of technic to the immortal Leipsic Cantor, keeping each

part clear and effective. Des Grieux comes on and laughingly asks some of the girls whether among them is to be found the one his heart dreams of. The chorus continues in its gay spirit of song, dance and laughter until the sound of a postillion's horn calls their attention to the arrival of the coach from Arras. An orchestral passage repeating the brisk theme of the opening prelude leads up to the entry of the diligence, from which Lescaut and Geronte di Lavois descend, the latter assisting Manon to alight. While the travellers give their orders to the landlord, Des Grieux catches sight of Manon, and is attracted by her face and figure. The crowd has dispersed and the students settle down to cards, and then Des Grieux speaks to the girl. In a pretty little musical dialogue, which Puccini always expresses so dramatically and with a sort of naturalness that may be called colloquial, the pair make each other's acquaintance, and, like the conventional action of writing of letters on the stage, the result is arrived at in the twinkling of an eye. Manon is called off by her brother's voice, and Des Grieux has his first love song, a tender impassioned melody full of great charm and lyrical strength. Edmund and the other students then chaff him as to the fair charmer good fortune has sent him, and Des Grieux makes his escape to think over his conquest. Another typical number, a duet in chorus between the students and the girls in a quick valse time, is broken by the arrival of Geronte and the brother, from whose dialogue we learn the sister is destined for a convent, and that the brother is not at all sorry to be quit

of his responsibility in the matter of looking after her. Geronte di Lavoir, the elderly and lecherous nobleman, appears to be a chance acquaintance, who has met with Lescaut and his sister while travelling in the coach. The carelessness of Lescaut and his evidently mercenary nature fits in only too readily with Geronte's desires, for he is immediately attracted to the artless little girl from the country and lays his evil plans. Darkness falls on the scene. Lescaut is attracted to the card-players, and joins them quickly in the hopes of adding to his store of wealth, and Geronte bargains with the innkeeper for a post-chaise and some swift horses, giving instructions that a lady will want to pop off very quickly to Paris in a short time. Edmund overhears this little plot, and discloses it to his friend Des Grieux. A short characteristic orchestral passage with a changing unrestful rhythm leads up to Manon's entrance. With a *naïveté* expressed in the music she sings, she comes to Des Grieux and tells him that she has kept her thoughtless promise. In a beautifully phrased impassioned passage Des Grieux urgently presses his suit. Manon, who continues to hang back a little, is overcome, and when an interruption from her brother, on whom the effects of wine is beginning to tell, startles them out of their ecstatic rapture, she attempts to return to the inn. But Des Grieux takes her away, and tells her of the plot of the old reprobate to abduct her, and urges her to escape with himself.

Edmund now tells Geronte of the escape of his prize, and that disappointed old *roué* tries to rouse the

brother from his lethargy. Lescaut decides that pursuit is worthless, and suggests following the pair to Paris, whither he is sure they have gone. Geronte stifles his fury and goes in to supper, while the students join in with a merry chorus, laughing at the old man's discomfiture as the act ends.

A few bars of a light tripping measure against a slight accompaniment of pizzicato chords from the strings opens the second act, the scene of which shows Manon installed in Geronte's luxurious house in Paris. Manon's toilette is being finished off by the perruquier, and the detached remarks and inquiries for the various articles necessary are musically "popped in" with a skilful hand. The brother comes in, and while the finishing process is still proceeding, he congratulates his sister on the transference of her affections from the penniless Des Grieux to the rich old nobleman. Manon, however, is by no means "off" with the old love, and in a tender little melody she sings of the humble dwelling where she and her lover passed a blissful time. Like so many of Puccini's melodies it begins by a reiteration of a single note, which gradually spreads itself into a lyrical flow. This works up into an expressive little duet, in which Manon longs for Des Grieux's return, and Lescaut promises to make him a successful gamester in order to gather in the necessary funds.

Some singers now arrive, and Manon explains that Geronte is a composer, and likes to air his art for her delectation. A mezzo soprano then begins a tuneful madrigal of a pastoral character, pleasantly melodious

but which hardly gives the idea, in full, of a certain stilted artificiality which is the peculiar flavour of the period. The other female voices join in a three-part chorus. Manon is rather bored with their music, and directs her brother to give them some money to get rid of them. The brother then departs to find Des Grieux, and Geronte and his friends arrive to a dainty little orchestral measure of the character of a minuet, with its fanciful little trills and twirls, but with its syncopated bass to preserve the idea of movement and progress. The dancing-master gives some hints in deportment to Manon, and the chorus of Abbés and other friends of Geronte's murmur their admiration at her graces. In a spirited little number Manon, who has politely told the company not to interrupt her lesson, sings to Geronte of the pleasure she is experiencing in her present life, and with characteristic skill the chorus is worked into the scheme as part of the musical fabric, and not merely as a decorative background.

After the departure of Geronte and his guests, Des Grieux, who has been told of Manon's whereabouts by the brother, comes in. The scene between them is musically full of emotional force, Des Grieux expressing his loneliness and despair at Manon's flight, while Manon deplures her weakness and assures him of her love in spite of all that the present situation entails. The highly dramatic duet works up to a fine intensity, and at the end their voices blend in a clever climax of a kind—a few strenuous reiterated notes in unison taking an upward leap at the finish—so

characteristic of the composer. Their happiness is short lived, for Geronte comes in and puts them to confusion. After cajoling him into something like sweet reasonableness, Manon thinks the little affair will blow over. But her truly feminine desire for a compromise, a gentle slipping over of things, is not to be fulfilled. Des Grieux, when they are once more alone, tells Manon that her present life is impossible, that she must give it all up and fly with him. He has a fine broad melody when Manon tries to return to her plan of letting things go on as they are. Manon is moved by his intensity, and begs once again for forgiveness, and agrees to wholly give her heart to him. Lescaut now rushes in breathless to acquaint Des Grieux and his sister that Geronte has put the police on their track. The scene works up into a clever trio of quick movement, Manon imperilling herself and her companion by her desire to carry off as much spoil as she can lay hands on. Geronte, attended by a sergeant and two men, block the entrance, and Manon in her surprise and agitation drops her cloak, and the jewels roll to the floor. With this effective finish—Manon being arrested, as we may suppose, in this instance for larceny, and the grimness of the situation intensified by the rascally brother's double-dealing in the matter being hinted at—the act closes, Des Grieux being held back from rescuing his beloved, and uttering a cry of despair.

Before the third act comes a characteristic orchestral interlude, in which the Wagnerian plan of continuing the story by means of a symphonic tone poem is

employed with individuality by Puccini. This intermezzo deals with two main ideas or phases, first the imprisonment of Manon, and secondly the sad journey to Havre, the port whence the *filles de joie*—how intensely sad is the irony of the description!—are to be taken over seas. To the score is appended a quotation from the Abbé Prévost's story, giving the clue to the strain of passion that comes in the music of this number, and blends skilfully with the sadness and the sense of movement which are its leading flavours, so to speak.

Des Grieux says in the story, "How I love her! My passion is so ardent that I feel I am the most unhappy creature alive. What have I not tried in Paris to obtain her release. I have implored the aid of the powerful. I have knocked at every door as a suppliant. I have even resorted to force. All has been in vain. Only one thing remains for me, and that is to follow her—go where she may—even unto the end of the world."

The scene of the third act shows the square near the harbour at Havre, with the sea and a ship in the distance. To the left is the barracks serving as a temporary prison, and at the gate a sentinel keeps guard. Des Grieux and the brother have evidently been keeping their vigil all through the night, and dawn is about to break. Very poignant and striking is the fevered agitation shown in the dialogue passages which open the scene. The brother has done his best to arrange for a rescue when his unhappy sister shall be brought forth and marched on board. The sentinel

who now comes on duty has been bribed, and Des Grieux is able to hold a conversation with Manon through the barred window. As the night passes into day, the all too short interview ends, and Des Grieux gives some final instructions to Manon. But the plans for the rescue fail, and Lescaut comes back to tell Des Grieux of their failure as the clamour of citizens and soldiers is heard. After a spirited snatch of chorus, the roll on the drums gives the signal for the gate of the barracks to open, out of which the women, in chains, pass out to the ship. The chorus in some telling little abrupt phrases pass remarks as the various names are read out, and the vivacious comments and rough laughter heighten the effect of sadness as Manon and Des Grieux snatch their last farewell. Manon hangs behind a little, only to be roughly pushed on by a sergeant. Then it is that Des Grieux's despair gets the upper hand. "Kill me," he cries, "or take me along with you as your meanest servant." The captain is touched by his devotion, and in the bluff, good-natured fashion of the sailor, agrees to take Des Grieux.

In the fourth act the death of Manon puts an end to this sad but very human tragedy. The music is one long duet, full of the highest emotional expression, and musically reaches to the highest heights of pure tragedy. The scene shows us a desolate dreary plain on the outskirts of New Orleans. Manon and Des Grieux by their dress and manner show the destitution of their circumstances. "Lean all your weight on me, love," murmurs Des Grieux, as he supports his com-

panion, worn out by fatigue and privation. Manon suffers from thirst, and Des Grieux, who can find no water in this arid waste, goes out to search farther afield. Memories of the life that is past now come to torture poor Manon, and when Des Grieux comes in again he finds her hopelessly distraught and at the point of death. Very touchingly does the music Manon sings picture the ebbing life, the faltering breath, the approach of the end ; and, with a long, low phrase on one note, Manon, whose last words are that her love for Des Grieux will never pass although her sins will be cleansed away, sinks peacefully in her long last sleep. Bursting into tears Des Grieux falls senseless over her body.

It is inevitable to return to a comparison between this work of Puccini's and that of Massenet. Massenet remains supreme in his own place from the delicate and spirited characterisation of his music. His *Manon* is essentially French, entirely of the eighteenth century, bringing out in the music all the artificiality, all the airs and graces. While the story is not without flesh and blood, it remains as a thing apart, moving in its own sphere, full of its own special atmosphere. Puccini takes the same French story and gives us a moving lyric drama, which is on a far broader plane, is essentially human and common to every place, every race and all time, since it deals with purely elemental passions.

Since *Manon* was the work by which Puccini's operatic music was first given to the English music-lovers, the following extracts from the critiques which

appeared after its first performance in England will be of interest.

There is nothing which brings back the past so vividly as the fascinating process of turning up back files of daily papers. The actual day and all the "common round" come back like a living thing; so many of the "trivial tasks" seem to assume quite a special importance of their own. To read the advertisements, the announcements of concerts, theatres and picture galleries, is to remember events and pleasant moments which have long passed out of one's mind. Speaking as a journalist, the astonishing thing to me is that the daily paper of twelve years ago or so should seem such an old-fashioned thing to look at. One does not feel this with regard to the journals of a far more remote age. It is only these few recent years that seem to have rushed along at such a fearful pace.

The *Morning Post* calls attention to the enterprise shown by producing a new work on the opening night of the season and promising another—Verdi's *Falstaff* to wit—within the first week.

Mr. Arthur Hervey, its critic, says: "Now that Italian composers have once more come to the fore we may expect to be well provided with operas from the quondam land of song, and now the home *par excellence* of the melodramatic opera. Mascagni and Leoncavallo having been duly welcomed, it is now the turn of Puccini, the much applauded author of *Manon Lescaut*." After pointing out the differences in the two books, he says that they offer the same amount of similarity the one to the other as do those of Gounod's *Faust* and

Boïto's *Mefistofele*. "The seeds of Wagnerian reform have not fallen on barren ground. Puccini reveals himself in *Manon* as a composer gifted with strong dramatic power, possessing an apparently innate feeling for stage effect and considerable melodic expression. His score is exempt from the crudities and vulgarities from which certain modern Italian operas are not free. The entire first act is treated with a wonderful lightness of touch. In the grand duet between Manon and Des Grieux in the second act, the composer has fully risen to the height of the situation. His music is full of melody and passion. It ends in a decidedly Wagnerian fashion which evokes recollections of *Tristan und Isolde*. We have only singled out a few salient features in a work that is remarkable from many points of view, not the least of which is its sincerity of purpose, and we cordially congratulate the composer upon having made so successful a *debut* amongst us."

In contrast to the *Times* critic, the writer says: "The inevitable intermezzo separates the second from the third act. It reproduces some of the motives heard in the above-named duet, and is extremely effective."

In the *Academy* of May 19, 1894, Mr. J. S. Shedlock writes: "The composer has really something to say, and has said it to very great, though not the best, advantage. At present he is too strongly influenced by Wagner and by others to display his full individuality. The influence of Wagner is specially marked not so much in the use of representative themes as in phrases and melodies which recall *Die Meistersinger*, *Tristan*, and *Siegfried*. As, for example, the music in the first act,

when Manon descends from the coach, or the opening of the intermezzo. . . . Of the four acts, the second and fourth appear to us the strongest . . . the love duet between Manon and Des Grieux is a masterpiece of concentration and gradation, the fine broad phrase at the close, afterwards heard with imposing effect at the end of the third act and with tender expression in the fourth, ought alone to ensure the success of the work. . . . Of course, in a modern opera an intermezzo is indispensable. Puccini, however, gives to his distinct dramatic meaning : the coda with its orchestration is original and expressive."

The *Times* said of *Manon*, on May 15, 1894, that in melodic structure and general cast of its phraseology the new work has many points of affinity with the most popular productions of the young Italian school ; but it is far above these in workmanship, in the reality of its sentiment, and, above all, in the atmosphere. It supposes that Puccini is the author of his own book, and on the whole prefers Massenet's libretto, and points out that the climax of the piece, musically, if not dramatically, is the penultimate scene, outside the prison at Havre. The finale to this scene in which occur the comments of the crowd on the prisoners, some of whom are covered with confusion, while others are jauntily defiant, is hailed as the finest number in the work. The weakest thing in the opera is, according to this critic, the intermezzo, but an atonement is made by the opening of the third act. The work, he concludes, amply deserved the very enthusiastic reception it obtained.

Even at this short distance of time it is something of a curiosity to read that the National Anthem was sung, under Signor Mancinelli's direction, at the beginning of the evening by the choristers grouped round a bust of the Queen.

VII

“LA BOHÈME”

THE mere fact that *La Bohème*, Puccini's fourth work, to which he gave the plain title of opera, is his most popular composition for the stage, makes one all the more inclined to search more minutely for weaknesses. But with repeated performances (for it has passed into the regular repertory of all opera houses wherever it has been played) its unity, both as an idea and an expression, comes out more and more with remarkable distinctness.

It captured the Italian ear and taste immediately, and babies were christened Mimi and Rodolfo just as ten years before, Santuzza and Turiddu, culled from Mascagni's *Cavalleria Rusticana*, were favourite baptismal appellations. It did not take long for England—represented, in this instance, by the comparatively limited number of opera-lovers—to take it to its heart. It delighted fastidious France and even satisfied hypercritical and essentially conservative Germany. Of all Puccini's work, it exhibits perhaps the most spontaneity, and as a piece of modern music—if the melodies themselves, apart from their very definite piquancy and freshness, do not rise to any vast



MISS ALICE ESTY AS MIMI IN "LA BOHEME"

heights of emotional expression—its absolute continuity is certainly a very high artistic achievement and stands unquestionably as its most striking feature.

Illica and Giocosa provided the book, and their idea in providing the framework is clearly indicated by the prefatory note to the vocal score. They begin with a quotation from the preface to Murger's *Vie de Bohème*, of which the thoroughly impressionistic opera is a most spirited musical expression. *The Bohemians*, under which title the opera was first presented in England, does not express by any means the exact nature of the work. It is the spirit of Bohemianism—that curious almost undefinable quality, which in reality simply means the absolute living for, and in, the mood of the moment, and is not by any means the entire monopoly of the artistic temperament—that is portrayed by the dramatic scheme. In the matter of following Murger's story, which as a novel is the most free in the whole range of modern literature, the librettists have been careful to give the spirit rather than the letter. They even roll two characters, Francine and Mimi, into one; for they find that although in Murger's book characters of each person are clearly defined, one and the same temperament bears different names and is incarnated, so to speak, in two different persons. “Who cannot detect,” they say, “in the delicate profile of one woman the personality both of Mimi and Francine? Who as he reads of Mimi's little hands, whiter than those of the Goddess of Ease, is not reminded of Francine's little muff?”

The librettists were content to string together four

more or less detached scenes from the story. Save for the death of Mimi at the close, there is no real climax to any of the four acts. In the first act, the two chief characters go off and sing their final high note in the passage ; in the third, where they part more in sorrow than in anger, the situation is varied between a similar device of finishing the duet " off " or by quietly sitting up at the back of the scene. These two, out of many points of subtlety, are mentioned merely as showing Puccini's mastery in catching the essential spirit of the dramatic scheme, which is atmospheric, or purely impressionistic. The supremacy of his art is shown in a very marked way by the preservation of the continuity of the idea by the musical expression. In this *La Bohème* stands as a very notable modern work solely because of its absolute keeping to the idea which dominates it. Leoncavallo set the same story to music, writing the book himself. As a mere adaptation of a novel for stage purposes, the dramatic portion of this opera, which keeps the stage in France and Germany, may be pointed to as offering certain points of superiority. But the music is certainly not atmospheric nor impressionistic, and the two works never really come into rivalry. Puccini's *La Bohème* is absolutely on its own plane, and in its own particular way supreme.

La Bohème was composed partly at Torre del Lago and partly in a villa which Puccini took for a time at Castellaccio, near Pescia. It was given for the first time at the Teatro Regio, Turin, on February 1, 1896, Toscanini being the conductor, and cast as follows :

<i>Rodolfo</i>	.	.	.	.	.	GORGA.
<i>Marcello</i>	.	.	.	.	.	WILMANT
<i>Schaunard</i>	.	.	.	.	.	PINI-CORSI.
<i>Colline</i>	.	.	.	.	.	MAZZARA.
<i>Benoit</i>	}	.	.	.	.	POLONINI.
<i>Alcindoro</i>						
<i>Mimi</i>	.	.	.	.	.	FERRANI.
<i>Musetta</i>	.	.	.	.	.	PASINI.

Its first appearance in England was interesting from the rare fact that a new opera should not only be produced within a year of its production in its native land, but that an English company should be the first to present it in our native tongue. With the title *The Bohemians* it was given at Manchester on April 22, 1897, at the Theatre Royal, by the Carl Rosa Company, conducted by Claude Jacquinet, and cast as follows :

<i>Rodolfo</i>	.	.	.	ROBER CUNINGHAM.
<i>Marcello</i>	.	.	.	WILLIAM PAUL.
<i>Schaunard</i>	.	.	.	CHAS. TILBURY.
<i>Colline</i>	.	.	.	ARTHUR WINCKWORTH.
<i>Mimi</i>	.	.	.	ALICE ESTY.
<i>Musetta</i>	.	.	.	BESSIE MACDONALD.

It was given at Covent Garden in English, in the October of the same year, with practically the same cast. Madame Alice Esty, from whom I learnt several interesting particulars, not only of the production of the opera, but of the work in general, and some of the past history of the wonderful organisation which is still doing such excellent work in keeping alive the love for opera in English, was the first English Mimi, although she was born in Boston. There

were many difficulties in the production, and, strange to say, the part of Mimi was first offered to Mdlle. Zélie de Lussan, the well-known exponent of the part of Carmen, not only in English, but in French as well. The photograph of Mdme. Alice Esty shows her in the last Act of *La Bohème*; and it will be noticed that she wears, not the customary black gown of the little seamstress, but one of some pretensions to magnificence. She followed, she told me, the idea of the composer, who particularly wished to bring out the fact that Mimi, after parting with Rodolfo, had formed an alliance with a rich viscount. This little incident, it will be remembered, is duly referred to by Musetta in the text.

I have also talked with Puccini about this first English performance of *La Bohème*. "I always feel about past performances," he said, "in the same way as dead people. Let us say nothing about them but good. But I shall never forget the shock it was to me on arriving at the theatre to find the disposition of the orchestra in a fashion which I have never seen except at a circus. Out of two boxes at each end the bass brass on the one side and the drum on the other gave forth detached blares and pops which really frightened the life out of me. They did not seem to have anything to do with the general musical scheme. I heard this band rehearsal start, and then I saw that the right idea, simply because of the square-cut idea as to the tempi on the part of the conductor was absolutely away from the spirit of the work. I asked the band to take a rest and then took two rehearsals with the piano

~~Lucas~~ ~~Lucas~~ = 10/10

Flauto 1

Oboe 1

Oboe 2

Coro 1

Clarinete

Fagotto 1

Coro 2

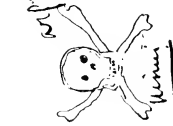
Tromba 1

Tromba 2

Tromba 3

Tuba

Timpani



Nota: (poco a poco) (poco a poco) (poco a poco)

murder

Murder

Violini 1

Violini 2

Viola

Violoncelli

Contrabbassi

64

myself. It was not long before the artists, all of them sincerely concerned with the proper interpretation of my ideas, and myself got into complete accord. I was very pleased on the whole with the way it eventually went, and although I did not see the subsequent London production, Ricordi told me that the Manchester performance was far more spontaneous."

How wonderfully Puccini is able, by playing a score of his on the piano and by his eloquent directions as to interpretation, to convey his subtlest meaning to an artist, I can speak from actual knowledge. I have heard him take a singer through a good deal of this very opera. Under his almost magical hands, a well learned interpretation is transformed into a genuinely spontaneous interpretation. Puccini in the present year of grace, when I told him that I had seen an important opera revived in the provinces with the same strange disposal of the orchestra which had caused him such distress, threw back his head and roared with laughter, not in the least unkindly. "You are a delightful people and seriously artistic, but you will keep on doing such funny things."

For a long time, however, Mdme. Melba, who in this country has invariably, since her first performance of the part in Italian here, been seen in the character, has appeared in the final scene in much the same plain dress as in the opening Act, the reason, doubtless, being that Mimi's loneliness and poverty should be emphasised. Lately, however, Mdme. Melba has reverted to the original method of dressing the part, and appears in the last scene in an even more elaborate

evening gown of pale blue satin, with a cloak, and dispenses with a hat.

La Bohème was brought to London after its first production, as we have seen, and was played about twenty times that season. The Covent Garden production in Italian was two years later, on June 30, 1899, when Mancinelli conducted, the cast being as follows :

<i>Rodolfo</i>	.	.	.	.	DE LUCIA.
<i>Marcello</i>	.	.	.	.	ANCONA.
<i>Schaunard</i>	.	.	.	.	GILIBERT.
<i>Colline</i>	.	.	.	.	JOURNET.
<i>Benoît</i>	}	.	.	.	DUFRICHE.
<i>Alcindoro</i>		.	.	.	
<i>Mimi</i>	.	.	.	.	MELBA.
<i>Musetta</i>	.	.	.	.	ZELIE DE LUSSAN.

It will be noticed that the gifted lady who was in the mind of the Carl Rosa authorities, for their initial production, as Mimi, was then seen in the particular part for which her temperament fitted her. By substituting Caruso as the Rodolfo—it is one of the very finest parts of this tenor—and Scotti as the Marcello, we have practically the same cast as that with which this opera at the present time fills Covent Garden ; invariably one of its most brilliant audiences.

In June 1898 Paris saw *La Bohème* at the Opera Comique, for which performance the composer visited the French Capital, for the first time, to superintend some of the first rehearsals. It went to America in the December of the same year, when it was mounted at the Academy of Music, Philadelphia, and sung in Italian. Melba was the Mimi, De Lussan the Musetta, and Pandolfini the Rodolfo.

New York had seen it, in English, at the American Theatre, in the previous month. This production, in which the Rodolfo was J. F. Sheehan; the Mimi, Yvonne de Treville; and the Musetta, Villa Knox, was by Henry W. Savage's Castle Square Opera Company. It was given in French at New Orleans in the winter of 1900 by Barrich's Company. It was first given in Germany at the Ander Wren Theatre, Vienna, Frances Saville being the Mimi and Franz Naval the Rodolfo.

Coming to the story, which with the music is by this time so familiar to opera-goers, the composer, in characteristic fashion, plunges us at once, without scarcely as much as a few bars of prelude, into the midst of things. At the outset the atmosphere is established by the restless, vivacious, detached and spirited phrase which, if it hardly ever assumes the proportions, musically considered, of a leading theme, at least flavours very strongly the whole musical fabric. It may well be taken to represent the free unrestrained spirit of the *Vie de Bohème*. The curtain rises quickly, and we see an attic, inhabited by the quartet of gay spirits, those bold adventurers, as Murger calls them, who are stopped by nothing—rain or dust, cold or heat. Every day's existence is a work of genius, a daily problem. Now abstemious as anchorites, now riding forth on the most ruinous fancies, not finding enough windows whence to throw their money. Truly, as Murger puts it, a gay life yet a terrible one!

Rodolfo, the poet, gazes pensively out of the window, Marcello, the artist, is painting the passage of the Red Sea. It is Christmas Eve, and the cold is bitter: and

to keep the stove alight, they burn up a MS.—a drama—of Rodolfo's.

All through this scene of colloquial and snappy dialogue, the music runs with remarkable movement. Soon Schaunard the musician comes in. He has been lucky enough not only to find a job but to get paid for it; and he tells us it was an Englishman who employed him. He has bought provisions with the spoil, and they spread the feast, in true Bohemian fashion, with a newspaper for table cloth. They begin the meal with light-hearted merriment, when the landlord comes in to collect his much overdue rent. That worthy is amazed to find his tenants can pay it, and after taking a glass with them, and chatting about his *amours*, the four irresponsibles get rid of him. They then decide on a visit to the café Momus in the Latin quarter, and leave Rodolfo behind for a space, as he has to finish an article for the *Beaver*. "Be quick, then," says Marcello, "and cut the *Beaver's* tale short."

As Rodolfo sits at the table to work, a timid knock is heard at the door, and Mimi, the pretty little seamstress who occupies a room near the roof, and who is already in the grip of the fell disease, consumption, comes in to ask for a light, her candle having been extinguished by the draught in the passage. She is evidently worn out by cough, cold and fatigue, and Rodolfo, after reviving her with a little wine, makes a remark as to her delicate beauty. Mimi, however, has not come to chatter or to be flattered, and with thanks, prettily expressed, she departs for her chamber. Fate, in the shape of a lost key, sends her back again, and

the draught in the passage puts out not only Mimi's candle, but Rodolfo's as well. While they both search for the key, Mimi's cold little hand touches that of Rodolfo, and the latter clasps it; and he then tells her of his life and aims and prospects in the beautifully melodious number, *Che gelida manina*, which, like so many of Puccini's themes, seems to grow out of the reiteration of a single note, swelling out in a delightful emotional fulness. Mimi tells Rodolfo of her work, and how she embroiders flowers on rich stuffs, which make her think of the green fields and the sweet scents of the country side; how lonely she is all by herself in her little top attic; how she takes her frugal supper all alone. The two natures are quickly brought together, and Mimi is soon in Rodolfo's arms and has received his first passionate kiss. The three friends outside now call up to him, and he says he has three lines to finish, but that he will join them anon, and that he wants two places kept at the supper table. With a full confession of her love, Mimi takes Rodolfo's arm, and their last notes, "My love, my love," are heard as they descend the staircase.

At the café Momus—the exterior of which we see as the curtain rises on the second Act, preceded by a clever and vivacious phrase given to the trumpets in the orchestra—our four brave Bohemians were known as the Four Musketeers, since they were inseparable. "Indeed," says Murger, "they always went about together, played together, dined together, often without paying the bill, yet always with a beautiful harmony worthy of the conservatoire orchestra."

In this scene, which is full of life and movement—showing in the treatment of the chorus, formed of children, people, soldiers, students, work girls, and gendarmes, that beautifully polished technique in melodic construction which makes Puccini so strong and in every way a master musician—the lively Musetta comes on the scene. Once more may Murger's own words fittingly recall her to mind. "Mademoiselle Musetta was a pretty girl of twenty, very coquettish, rather ambitious, but without any pretensions to spelling. Oh, those delightful suppers . . . a perpetual alternative between a blue brougham and an omnibus: between the Rue Breda and the Latin quarter."

Although the incidents represented appear to follow consecutively, it is a little strange to find a sort of *al fresco* entertainment in progress after the references to the bitter cold in the preceding Act. At any rate, whether the dramatist's license be allowed or not—and we may easily imagine a flight of time to have taken place since the happenings in the opening Act—the café Momus, in this second Act, is so full that our quartet of Bohemians, with Musetta and her elderly admirer, take their supper *en plein air*. There is little of incident, or progress of events, in this lively scene. Musetta is reconciled after singing her delicious song, in slow waltz form, to her Marcello, and the fatuous old Alcindoro is left to pay the bill of the whole party. Yet against this, the sense of movement and gaiety, shown by the ever-moving crowd, and the incident of the toy-seller Parpignol—just a plain slice of life put down on the stage in a truly

modern method—is beautifully worked out in the music, and never for an instant does it flag in vivacity.

Musetta comes into prominence again in the third Act. Again is the weather intensely cold, and the chill drear atmosphere is indicated in the music at the opening by the subtle passage of bare fifths, which is further remarkable as a purely musical effect from its connection with the trumpet passage which heralded the second Act. The scene is a place beyond the toll-gate, on the Orleans road, at the end of the Rue d'Enfer. Over a tavern hangs Marcello's picture as a signboard, with its title altered to the Port of Marseilles, signifying its adaptation to its environment.

Two scenes of parting dominate the dramatic plan of this Act, that of Rodolfo and Mimi, and that of Marcello and Musetta. They are cleverly contrasted. Very pathetically does Mimi's "*addio senza rancor*" come from the depths of her simple little heart, while the end is foreshadowed by the hacking cough which frequently chokes her utterances. Musetta is taken to task by Marcel for flirting, and off she goes after a strongly dramatic duet, which for characterisation and force is one of the most distinctive numbers in the opera ; and after her exit, in a fury, Mimi and Rodolfo appear to agree, indicated by the last phrases of their tender duet, to continue together, for yet a space, in the old relations.

In the fourth Act we are back in the attic ; and the quartet of Bohemians are once more struggling with the problem of keeping body and soul together. Two

of them, Rodolfo and Marcel, at any rate, are lonely, for Mimi has been taken up by a viscount, and Musetta, dressed in velvet—through which, as Rodolfo tells Marcel, she cannot hear her heart beat—is riding in a carriage. But with all their troubles they keep a stout heart and are able to jest over the herring and rolls which Schaunard and Colline bring in for dinner. They dance and romp, and play the fool in the lightest hearted manner until Musetta suddenly breaks in upon their pretended jollity. The end is reached rapidly. Mimi has come home to die, and this she does after an intensely sad, simple and moving scene, stretched, as they placed her, on Rodolfo's hard little bed. Infinitely touching is Mimi's reference, in her last words, to the song which Rodolfo sang in the opening Act. She begins *Che gelida manina* only to break off in a fit of coughing. Marcello has gone out to fetch a doctor and Musetta brings a muff to warm the dying girl's fingers. Mimi's spirit passes away however before aid can be brought to her, and the pathos of the situation is intensified by the silence in which it takes place. It is Schaunard who whispers to Marcello that she is dead. To Rodolfo's last despairing cry of "Mimi! Mimi!" as he realises that his loved one is no more, does the curtain fall.

There is little to point to in the music save its chief and outstanding feature, its continuity. In this the whole charm and strength of the work lies. Orchestrally, the score of *La Bohème* is a beautifully polished one, not so symphonically complete as *Manon* for instance, but essentially individual. For fulness

as a constructional background one may point to the orchestration of the duet in the first Act ; for daintiness of effect, the use of harmonics on the harp against the muted strings in Musetta's waltz-song ; while many happy touches are seen all through, such as the xylophone and muted trumpets at the toy-sellers' entrance in the café scene ; or again, the striking passage in fifths at the opening of the third Act, given to the harp and flutes over the 'cellos playing *tremolo*. The orchestra employed is the usual large modern orchestra, with a piccolo, glockenspiel and xylophone. Considerable use is also made of the division of the 'cellos, in many places, into three.

The complete success, notwithstanding certain difficulties that have been referred to, of the first performance of the opera in this country, was duly chronicled in London, on the day following the event, in *The Times*. The notice states that the composer was called at the end and bowed his acknowledgments, from which it would appear that he was prevailed upon at least to appear on the fall of the curtain, although, by all accounts I have heard from those who took part in the performance, Puccini adopted the custom—followed, if we may believe certain traditions, by certain notable playwrights—of wandering up and down the streets until the *première* was over.

The writer of the notice in question places the work on a higher level than *Manon*, speaks of the highly dramatic intensity reached by simple means in the scenes between Mimi and Rodolfo, notices in the absence of set songs the Wagnerian method of

continuous melody, and sums it up as a decided success gained by the beauty of its melody, the refinement of the music as a whole, the cleverness in the handling of the themes, and by the absence of clap-trap. The performance is spoken of as a genuine triumph, in spite of the leading tenor's hoarseness.



PUCCINI IN "MORNING DRESS" (NATIONAL PEASANT COSTUME)
AT TORRE DEL LAGO



PUCCINI WILD-FOWL SHOOTING ON THE LAKE AT TORRE DEL LAGO

VIII

“ TOSCA ”

WITH his next opera—for *Tosca* is the only one of his works so entitled by the composer—Puccini made a rather curious reversal of the proceedings as compared with *La Bohème*, taking it from an Italian story treated from the French point of view. From the old world story of Murger, Puccini turned to a notable example of modern French stagecraft, in Sardou's drama of *La Tosca*. His librettists again were Giocosa and Illica, and they provided the composer with a strikingly apt presentation of the grim story; not one, perhaps, that lends itself altogether to musical expression, but one which certainly grips the attention and carries the hearer along. By *Tosca*, Puccini certainly sustained his now universal popularity made manifest by the preceding *La Bohème*. It was given first at the Costanzi Theatre, Rome, on January 14, 1900, conducted by Mugnone, and cast as follows :

<i>Tosca</i>	.	.	.	.	.	DARCLÉE.
<i>Cavaradossi</i>	.	.	.	.	.	DE MARCHI.
<i>Scarpia</i>	.	.	.	.	.	GIRALDOIN.
<i>Angelotti</i>	.	.	.	.	.	GALLI.
<i>The Sacristan</i>	.	.	.	.	.	BORELLI.

London saw it in the summer of the same year at Covent Garden, where it was given on July 12 with the following cast, Mancinelli being the conductor.

<i>Tosca</i>	.	.	.	.	.	TERNINA.
<i>Cavaradossi</i>	.	.	.	.	.	DE LUCIA.
<i>Scarpia</i>	.	.	.	.	.	SCOTTI.
<i>Angelotti</i>	.	.	.	.	.	DUFRICHE.
<i>The Sacristan</i>	.	.	.	.	.	GILIBERT.

In America, *Tosca* was first given in Italian on February 4, 1901, at the Metropolitan Opera House, New York, by Maurice Grau's company, the cast and conductor being the same as that for the first Covent Garden performance, with the substitution of Cremonini for De Lucia as Cavaradossi.

Its first American production in English was by Henry W. Savage's company, at the Teck Theatre, Buffalo, and cast as follows, Emanuel being the conductor :

<i>Tosca</i>	.	.	.	.	ADELAIDE NORWOOD.
<i>Cavaradossi</i>	.	.	.	.	JOSEPH SHEEHAN.
<i>Scarpia</i>	.	.	.	.	W. GOFF.
<i>Angelotti</i>	.	.	.	.	F. J. BOYLE.
<i>The Sacristan</i>	.	.	.	.	FRANCIS CARRIER.

In the music of *Tosca* Puccini reveals, more powerfully perhaps than anywhere, that quick instinct of the theatre which may be called dramatic, or merely a very clever fitting of music to the mood of the moment. It is, in fact, very purely melodramatic, the word being used here not in its accepted sense of the traditional "tootle-tootle" in the orchestra when the wicked villain pursues the innocent and sorely tried heroine.

The story is tragic in all conscience, but it hardly reaches the level of true tragedy, since it is more horrible than impressive, and lacks that restraint and poetry which are two necessary qualities. This much must be said for the operatic version. It is a shade less revolting, less purely realistic than the drama, and it undoubtedly provides a splendid acting *rôle* for the exponent of the name part; while the lover, and the villain—Scarpia, the chief of the police—are provided with opportunities, very little behind, in point of vocal and dramatic effect. One could very well imagine a production, on prevailing lines set upon elaboration of detail, in which Puccini's music, or a great deal of it, was used purely as incidental music. This suggestion, however, must in no way be taken to mean that as a whole the music of this opera lacks continuity of interest or fails to exhibit the close and essential union between speech and song. There are many pages of strong and definite lyrical charm, but somehow the main interest lies in the action which fascinates the spectator, rather, one feels, against his better—or more calm—judgment. It is, in short, a most moving picture of love, hate, jealousy, passion and intrigue. These, after all, form the great bulk of the material for operatic treatment; and without entering into the question whether *Tosca* is or is not a work for all time, it has certain very "live" attributes which make it a notable achievement.

The scene in the first act shows the Attavanti Chapel in the Church of Saint Andrea della Valle in Rome. The strenuous, shuddering chords which pre-

face the short prelude are representative of the cruel nature of Scarpia, whose personality dominates the scene—more than this, the figure seems to give at once the atmosphere of stress, and hints at a wealth of incident which characterises the whole of that which is to follow.

A man in prison garb, harassed, dishevelled, well-nigh breathless with fear and haste, comes in and glances hastily this way and that. This is Angelotti, a victim of Papal tyranny, who has escaped from the Castle of S. Angelo; and his entrance, it will be noted, is also characterised by a theme always associated with him throughout the work.

On a pillar is an image of the Virgin, and underneath it a stoup. "My sister wrote to tell me of this spot," says Angelotti, as he searches for the key which will open the chapel and allow him to escape. While he searches in feverish haste the string of chromatic chords carries on the idea of his agitation. With yet another glance to reassure himself that he has not been followed, he opens the gate in the grille of the chapel and disappears.

A light tripping figure ushers in the Sacristan, and it continues for a space while he walks to the *daïs*, on which is an easel and a covered picture. He complains of the bother he has in washing the brushes of the artist who is painting an altar-piece. He is surprised not to find Cavaradossi painting. The Angelus rings, and the Sacristan kneels and continues the prayer.

Cavaradossi now comes in, and a broad melodious phrase is heard as he ascends the *daïs* and uncovers



PUCCHINI SNOWBALLING IN SICILY



PUCCHINI WRESTLING AT POMPEII

the picture. The Sacristan is amazed to find that it represents the features of a lady who has been frequently to pray in the church, and is further shocked when the artist draws forth a miniature and compares it with his figure, into whose features he has incorporated the dusky glow and peach-like bloom of his beloved Floria. The phrase indicated at Cavaradossi's entrance now swells out in a lyrical melody in which he sings that his Madonna's eyes are blue, while Tosca's are dark as a moonless night, the Sacristan punctuating the rhapsody with a pious ejaculation to the effect that the artist scorns the saints and jests with the ungodly.

After the Sacristan's departure to a snatch of his characteristic phrase, Angelotti, believing the church empty, comes out of the chapel. Cavaradossi does not at first recognise, in this prison-worn creature, his friend the Consul of the Republic. Tosca's voice is heard, and the artist makes a sign to Angelotti to remain yet a little while in hiding, and on hearing that the fugitive is spent with hunger, he gives him the basket left, for his refreshment, by the Sacristan.

A quick moving figure, accompanied by triplets, announces Tosca's entrance, and she thinks that she has heard her lover conversing with another woman, and even declares she heard the swish of skirts. Cavaradossi attempts to embrace her, but she reproves him, and first makes an offering before the Virgin's shrine. This done, she tells him that although she is singing at the theatre that evening, the piece is a short one, and proceeds to sing in a delightfully suave

melody, which increases gradually in intensity, of the delights of love in a quiet secluded cottage far away from all worldly distractions. Cavaradossi comes in at the close with an impassioned burst on a characteristic high note, in which he says that he is caught in the toils of her enchantment. The artist makes as his excuse for her quick dismissal the need of continuing his work on the picture, but his frequent glances towards the chapel show that his anxiety for his friend is the cause of his agitation. But Tosca now comes in sight of the picture, and is struck by the resemblance of the face to some one she has seen. She immediately connects the whispering she has heard before arriving upon the scene and the anxious looks towards the chapel together as a proof that Cavaradossi has been meeting the original of the picture. The incident, however, leads up to a further avowal of devotion on the part of Cavaradossi, and their voices blend together for a brief space in a delicious bit of melody. Tosca elects to be comforted, and with a final thrust she goes out, requesting her lover to change the lady's eyes to black ones.

Angelotti now comes out of the chapel and tells of his plan of escape. Cavaradossi gives him the key of his villa, and indicates the way he may reach it. Angelotti takes up the bundle of clothes left by his sister for his disguise—the sister being the lady who has been frequenting the church of late, and who has attracted the artist's attention—and goes off, while his friend tells him, as a final precaution in case of urgent need, of a passage that leads down to a cellar.

Just as Angelotti is going the cannon sound from the fortress, giving the signal that the prisoner's escape has been discovered.

On their exit, the Sacristan enters, followed by choir boys, acolytes and a crowd of people. The Sacristan tells them the news of Bonaparte's defeat, that there will be rejoicings and a new cantata for the occasion sung by Tosca, and his snatch of melody is cleverly derived from the theme heard on his first entrance. The choir boys burst out into a great riot of joyous merrymaking, beginning with “Te Deum” and “Gloria,” and breaking out into “Long live the King,” the Sacristan trying his best to drive them into the sacristy to vest for the festival service. Their jollity is cut short by the entrance of Scarpia—whose sinister theme breaks in characteristically, as always—followed by Spoletta and others of his staff. After bidding them curtly prepare for the solemn “Te Deum,” he motions the rather frightened Sacristan to his side, and tells him that a State prisoner has escaped, and from information received has been tracked here. He asks which is the Attavanti Chapel, and the facts that the gate is open and that a new key is in the lock give at once a clue.

A police agent comes out of the chapel and brings with him the basket given to Angelotti by Cavaradossi ; and Scarpia, after a little more judicious questioning of the Sacristan, is able to guess that the fugitive has been assisted by the painter.

Tosca now comes back, and after signalling to the Sacristan, Scarpia retires behind a pillar, watching her

as she looks about for Cavaradossi. To serve his own ends, he decides to rouse the jealousy of the woman ; and after a little flattery, expressed in a suave, flowing melody, he brings out a fan and mildly inquires whether it forms any part of the customary outfit of a painter. From the coronet on it Tosca recognises it as belonging to the Marchioness Attavanti, who is the sister of Angelotti, and a member of the family to whom the chapel is dedicated. Forgetful of Scarpia's presence and the place where she is, Tosca, in a finely emotional passage—broken into now and again by Scarpia, who rams home his poisonous suggestions—bewails the weakness of her lover ; and the wily Scarpia, after tenderly escorting her to the church door, despatches an agent to watch her closely. His exultation at having fired her jealousy is punctuated twice by the sound of cannon ; and into the rather curious triplet accompaniments is worked the opening phrases of the organ, which signals the approach of the procession of the Chapter, with the Cardinal, to whom Scarpia makes a reverence as he passes him.

“ Our help is in the name of the Lord, who hath made heaven and earth,” sing the Chapter and monks, while Scarpia continues his musings as to the business he has on hand. From the mere catching of the escaped prisoners his thoughts turn to lustful possession of Tosca ; and the whole scene, finely contrasted, is worked up with superb force into one of those magnificently solid finales which reveal the technic of Puccini so emphatically. The cannon continue to go off—the sound is managed, by the way, by striking a huge cone



PUCCINI DESCENDING ETNA ON A MULE



PUCCINI ON HIS FARM AT CHIATRI

over which is stretched, drum-fashion, a tight skin—the whole crowd turn towards the high altar, the stately "Te Deum" swells through the church, and at the end, Scarpia, after saying that for Tosca he would renounce his hopes of heaven, joins in the last phrase: "All the earth shall worship Thee, the Father everlasting." The curtain descends quickly to the harsh progression of chords forming the Scarpia theme.

The second act shows us Scarpia's room in the Farnese Palace. It is on an upper floor. To the left a table is laid, and at the back a large window looks over the courtyard.

Scarpia is at supper, and looks at his watch from time to time impatiently. "Tosca is a famous decoy," he sings; "to-morrow's sunrise shall see the two conspirators hanging side by side on my tallest gallows." Ringing a handbell, which is answered by Sciarrone, he inquires whether Tosca is in the Palace, and learns that she has been summoned thither. Scarpia orders the window to be thrown open, and borne on the evening air comes the sound of a gavotte from the orchestra which is playing in one of the lower rooms at an entertainment given by Queen Caroline. Very skilfully is this graceful little melody, just sufficiently archaic in its mould to be characteristic of the period, used as a background for the clever dialogue which follows, from which we learn that Tosca is to be lured to the Palace in the hope of seeing Cavaradossi. Spoletta comes in to give an account of his visit to the villa, and enrages Scarpia by telling him of Angelotti's escape. The minister is somewhat mollified when

Spoletta tells him that he promptly secured the painter. Now, with striking effect, the dance measure gives place to a cantata, proving that Tosca is in the Palace in the Queen's apartments. Scarpia's directions as to securing Cavaradossi are worked into the musical fabric with consummate effect, and continue as the painter, now a prisoner, is led in. Cavaradossi breaks off from his curt and guarded replies to Scarpia's questioning on hearing Tosca's voice. He denies strenuously that Angelotti received any aid from him, and even laughs at his examiner. Scarpia shuts the window in anger, and the repetition of his characteristic similar phrase leads up to a strenuous passage in which determination is skilfully depicted in contrast to the almost colloquial movement of the preceding passages. "Once more," says Scarpia, "where is Angelotti?" and from a remark by Spoletta the application of the process torture to wring a confession from the prisoner is hinted at. Tosca now enters, and runs quickly to her lover, who tells her quickly in an undertone not to say a word of what she has seen at the villa. As Scarpia signals to Sciarrone to slide back the panel which leads to the torture chamber, he says formally, "Mario Cavaradossi, the judge is wanting to take your depositions." Sciarrone then gives the directions to Roberto, an underling, to at first apply the usual pressure, and to increase it as he will direct him.

Then follows a highly dramatic scene, ushered in with a characteristic theme indicating the torture which Tosca's lover is to undergo, between Scarpia and

Tosca, in which the latter dismisses the fan episode as a feeble trick to rouse her jealousy. Scarpia, however, comes very quickly to plain speaking, and tells Tosca that she had better confess all that she knows as to the escape of Angelotti if she wishes to spare Cavaradossi an hour of anguish. Tosca learns with horror that a fillet of steel, gradually tightening round the temples, is being applied to Cavaradossi's head, and on hearing his groan of pain, she relents and bursts out that she will speak if he is released. But Mario from within calls on Tosca to be silent, and that he despises the pain. Scarpia directs further pressure to be applied. Tosca is allowed to gaze through the open door, and, distracted by what she sees, signifies her intention of revealing all she knows. Her mind is made up when she hears another groan of anguish, and she tells Scarpia that Angelotti is to be found in the well in the garden of the villa. Scarpia now orders Cavaradossi to be brought in. From Scarpia's directions to Spoletta, the fainting victim, nearly at his last gasp by what he had endured, learns of Tosca's treachery, and curses her. This painful scene, finely worked up as it is in intensity, comes to a climax by the news brought in by Sciarrone of the victory at Marengo by Bonaparte. This enrages Scarpia, but he will at least keep the victim he has in hand; and Cavaradossi, exulting as he foresees the downfall of the minister, is borne off. Tosca now turns to Scarpia, and implores him to save Cavaradossi. Splendidly dramatic is the closing scene, beginning with Scarpia's light and airy remark that his little supper was inter-

rupted, and rising to heights of emotional fulness when Tosca asks him outright to name his price for saving her lover's life. Tosca's horrified scream, to a rising passage of two high notes, when she listens to Scarpia's lascivious proposals, thoroughly fits the situation. The drums are used cleverly to indicate the march of the prisoners to their doom, and the setting up of the gallows for Cavaradossi, and in contrast to Scarpia's sinister passages, comes the broad lyrical and impassioned prayer of Tosca, who rails at God for having forsaken her in her hour of need. Scarpia presses his infamous proposals, when Spoletta returns, and speaking outside brings the news that Angelotti has poisoned himself rather than allow himself to be taken. A question as to the disposal of Cavaradossi brings the climax, and Tosca, by taking upon herself to give directions as to this, indicates her consent to Scarpia's wishes. But this master of deceit will not allow the release to be managed in any but his own way. He tells Spoletta that there will be an execution, but it will be a sham one, as in the case of another prisoner, by name Palmieri, the guns being loaded with blank cartridge only, and the victim instructed to fall and feign death. But Tosca wants more than this on her side of the bargain. Scarpia must give them both a passport out of the place, and as he goes to the table to write it Tosca's eyes catch sight of a knife on the table. In an instant her mind is made up, and as he returns to give her the paper, and to clasp her in a feverish embrace, she plunges the knife into his heart. The death-scene

is perhaps a little prolonged, but seeing that it has been preceded by the torturing of Cavaradossi, it is at least logical that Tosca should remind him of the ghastly torture he inflicted on her loved one. The intensity of the scene is rounded off by the expressive phrase on a low monotone of Tosca, “And yesterday all Rome lay at this man’s feet.” The action to the finishing notes of this moving scene follows that of the play. Tosca searches for the passport, and snatches it from the fast locking palms of the dead man. With a shudder she rinses her finger with a serviette dipped in the carafe, and then puts the candles from the supper table at the head of the corpse, and taking a crucifix from the wall, places it on the breast, as the Scarpia theme in long-drawn chords is played softly by the orchestra. She goes out quietly as the curtain falls.

The third act takes place on an open space or platform within the Castle of S. Angelo. At the back we see the dome of S. Peter’s and the Vatican. The expressive prelude, and the opening song by a shepherd, are musically of great interest. It begins with a horn passage, and at the rise of the curtain it is still night, and we see the dawn break, and hear the many bells from the church towers, one of the most striking sounds of the Eternal city.

The pastoral melody of the shepherd has a plaintive character, and he sings :

Day now is breaking,
The weary world awaking,
Lending new sorrow
And sadness to the morrow.

And the sheep-bells come in with their jangle as the shepherd continues, with a suggestion of a love theme :

If you could prize me
To live I might try,
But if you despise me
I may as well die.

Then the church bells continue the strain, now near, now afar.

A gaoler enters and looks over the parapet to see if the soldiers to whom is entrusted the grim task of execution have arrived. Led by a sergeant, the picket enters, bringing Cavaradossi. The gaoler, after making him sign a paper, tells him that he has an hour, and that a priest is at his disposal. Cavaradossi, after giving a ring to the gaoler as the price of the favour, is allowed to write a letter, and sings his beautiful air, one of the chief lyrical gems of the opera, "E luce van stelle." It ends emotionally, and the singer bursts into tears with the thought that never was life so dear to him as now when he is within sight of death.

Spoletta comes in bringing Tosca, and is amazed to find that she brings a safe-conduct. Tosca and Cavaradossi join in a finely expressive duet, in which the latter learns of her devotion, and how for him she killed Scarpia. Towards the close the voices are unsupported, and the whole number has a very characteristic force and movement.

The sky has gradually been getting lighter, and the passage of time is marked by the striking of the hour of four by the church clock. Then Tosca gives the



FUCCINI AT TORRE DEL LAGO IN HIS MOTOR BOAT "BUTTERFLY"

final instructions to the condemned man. "As soon as they fire, fall down." Cavaradossi, in his joy at his coming release, is even able to be humorous, and suggests that he will be acting like Tosca.

Tosca watches the supposed execution from the parapet. "How well he acts!" she cries, after she has covered her ears with her hands to shut out the sound of the shooting, and then sees her lover prostrate on the ground. Leaning over, she calls to him: "Get up, Mario, now. Quickly away, Mario, Mario." Then with a heart-piercing cry she learns that Scarpia has been false to the end, and that the execution has in very truth taken place. By this time the news of Scarpia's death has come out, and Spoletta naturally fixes on Tosca as the murderess. The soldiers' voices are heard joining in the hue and cry, and Sciarrone comes in to seize Tosca. Tosca after thrusting back Spoletta nearly to the ground, hurls herself from the parapet. Her last thoughts are of the tyrant who has so cruelly wronged her, and her last words are: "O Scarpia, we shall face God together!"

In pure orchestration, Puccini in *Tosca* shows an advance on *La Bohème*, in the general symphonic fullness and in the more extended use of representative themes. The orchestra employed is the usual large orchestra of the moderns, and Puccini adds a third flute, a contrabassoon, a celesta, and for the special effects in the opening of the third act a set of bells. There are several places where more work than hitherto is obtained from the dividing of the strings, but not in any way like the Strauss method, for example,

of subdividing them into several distinct groups. As will have been seen during the progress of the story, the themes stand out as invariably characteristic, and at the first entrance of Tosca the theme is delightful, given out by the flute against the plucked strings. There is excellent work by the wood wind in the impressive finale of the first act, which is mainly developed out of the bell theme.

In the pastoral music at the opening of the third act Puccini uses with characteristic force a passage of fifths—one which he is always very fond of employing, and which, curiously enough, always has the effect of bringing about the special flavour or atmosphere it is intended to convey in any one particular place.

In the *Daily Telegraph* the critic prefaces his column notice, which appeared the day after the first production, with a protest against the conjunction of a pure and beautiful art—music—with the workings of a humanity that has gone to the devil. But apart from these considerations, the writer has little but praise for the singularly lucid libretto.

“The first and all important remark to make concerning the music,” he proceeds, “has to do with its Italian character. There is very little that can be regarded as common to it and to the typical German opera. The pedestal is not on the stage and the statue in the orchestra. Tosca does not offer us declamation as a key to symphonic music nor symphonic music as a key to declamation. The work does not follow the old operatic lines into matter of detail. All is subordinate to the changing situations and emotions of

the stage. So far Tosca is modern; for the rest it presents the characteristics which have always distinguished Italian opera—long reaches of tender or passionate melody, intense climaxes, and a disposition to proceed everywhere on broad and direct lines to the desired goal."

The charm of the light music of the first act, the beautiful soul of Cavaradossi to the picture he has painted, the piling up of the effects in the finale, the vigour of the music in the second act, particularly where Scarpia presses his suit, and the duet of the lovers at S. Angelo, are the points which call forth praise, while, on the other hand, this critic finds most of the music allotted to Angelotti and Scarpia dull. The notice ends with a tribute to the art of Ternina, who "acted with the grace and directness of a true tragedian."

Mr. Arthur Hervey, in the *Morning Post*, sets out, very clearly and characteristically, a plain and straightforward account of the music and story. The curious succession of chords at the opening of the prelude, the suggestion of the amorous nature of Scarpia's character by the opening notes of the second act, the pleasing effect of the gavotte heard during Scarpia's monologue, when he awaits the arrival of his spies, the beautiful song for Tosca, "Vissi d'arte d'amor," the beauty of the music in the last act, the ingenuity, finish and resource of the orchestration as a whole, are points which are fully expressed by this discerning critic. With regard to the interpretation, he does not find Signor Scotti's Scarpia entirely satisfactory, while he

joins in the fullest praise for Ternina's masterly performance in the name part. It ends, that the opera was received with every sign of success, and that the composer, Mancinelli, the conductor, and the exponents were called many times before the curtain.

The *Times* critic makes an interesting comparison at the outset of his notice, referring to the masterly finale of the first act: "The scene is one in which Meyerbeer would have delighted, but it is treated by Puccini with far greater sincerity than Meyerbeer could ever command, and with a knowledge of effect at least equal to his. With regard to the use of representative themes, the writer finds that the one associated with the passion of Scarpia—a phrase with an arpeggio in it, appears to be derived from the woman's charm in the "Ring." Referring to the gavotte and cantata at the opening of the second act, the writer says they are "in excellent style and belong to the period of the action or a little before it, as it may be doubted whether the Roman composers of 1800 were capable of producing so interesting a piece of solid workmanship as the cantata, or so graceful and original a composition as the gavotte."

IX

“MADAMA BUTTERFLY”

FOR his latest opera, *Madama Butterfly*, Puccini turned to the flowery land of Japan for the environment of a story—the book being by Illica and Giocosa—which, following his invariable custom, he chose himself. The suggestion appears to have come originally from Mr. Frank Nielson, who was then the stage manager at Covent Garden, that Puccini should go and see the play by Belasco, running at the time at the Duke of York's Theatre in London. He did so, and was immediately taken with its possibilities. It may be mentioned as a tribute to the actors who interpreted this play, that without knowing any English Puccini was able to follow the story with perfect ease. He was greatly struck by Miss Evelyn Millard's performance of the name part, and her photograph as Butterfly is among his collection of celebrities at Torre del Lago.

The story is a slight one, and is no more Japanese than the plot of *La Bohème* is French. It is a presentation of the universal theme of a man's passion, which is an episode, and a woman's love, which is her life. A little Japanese girl is wooed and won by an American naval officer. She, in her trust and devotion

regards herself, after going through some sort of marriage ceremony, as his lawful wife. He regards the whole affair as an incident, the mere satisfying of an animal instinct, and returns, married to an American wife, to find the girl a mother. The ending is the usual sad one—the girl takes her life when her dishonoured state comes upon her in its full significance.

Madama Butterfly was written for the most part during Puccini's recovery from his accident; but he had planned out a good deal of it by the end of 1902 or the beginning of the next year. He himself about this time said of the work: "As an opera, it would be in one act divided by an intermezzo. The theme has a sentiment, a passion which veritably haunts me. I have it constantly ringing in my head."

The intermezzo mentioned was Puccini's idea of treating the very effective and most eloquent silence on which, it will be remembered, the curtain fell, while the little Japanese girl with her servant and baby were keeping their long, long vigil through the night, awaiting the return of the supposed husband who, after all, was only a lover, and a poor one at that.

Puccini was at Rome for a time soon after his complete recovery from his accident, and took special pains to get up the local colour for his new work. For this he invoked the aid of the Japanese ambassadress, and obtained some actual Japanese melodies from a friend of hers in Paris. Of music there is no lack in Japan, but by the Japanese themselves it is never written down. Like the troubadours of old, the musicians, who are a

sort of guild, hand the traditional songs and dances on from father to son.

Madama Butterfly was produced at the Scala, Milan, on February 17, 1904. Canpanini was the conductor, and it was cast as follows :

<i>Butterfly</i>	.	.	.	.	.	STORCHIO.
<i>Suzuki</i>	.	.	.	.	.	GIACONIA.
<i>Pinkerton</i>	.	.	.	.	.	ZENATELLO.
<i>Sharpless</i>	.	.	.	.	.	DE LUCA.
<i>Goro</i>	.	.	.	.	.	PINI-CORSI.
<i>Zio Bonzo</i>	.	.	.	.	.	VENTURINI.
<i>Yakusidé</i>	.	.	.	.	.	WULMANN.

Although Puccini was at the very zenith of his popularity a strange thing happened with the first production of this new opera, and the composer went through a similar experience to that which Wagner had to suffer when *Tannhäuser* was first given in Paris. The audience simply howled with derision. For the reason of this it is difficult to account. The storm of disapproval began after the first few bars of the opening act. Puccini, very quietly, took matters into his own hands, and at the end of the performance thanked the conductor for his trouble and marched off with the score. The second or any subsequent performance was therefore an impossibility.

He tells an amusing story of a little incident occasioned by the fiasco, which, he says, brought him at least some little consolation, and atoned for much disillusion. A bookkeeper at Genoa, an ardent admirer of Puccini, indignant at what he considered the outrageous treatment—for it was nothing else—meted out to his favourite composer, went to the City Hall to

register the birth of a daughter. When the clerk asked the name of the child, he replied, "Butterfly." "What!" said the official, "do you want to brand your child for life with the memory of a failure?" But the father persisted, and so as Butterfly the child was entered. A little time after this Puccini heard of the incident, and rather touched with the simple devotion, asked the father to bring the child to see him. On the appointed day Puccini looked out of the window and saw a long stream of people approaching his front door. Not only did the father bring little "Butterfly," but, as in the first act of the opera from which her name was derived, her mother, sisters, cousins, aunts, uncles, as well—in fact the whole surviving members of the genealogical tree. Puccini laughingly said at the end of a trying afternoon that it was the most gigantic reception he had ever held.

The despised opera was given in what is known as the present revised version at Brescia, on 28 May of the same year, the Butterfly being Krusceniski, and Bellati the Sharpless, Zenatello being again the Pinkerton. Strange to say, it proved entirely to the taste of those who saw it. The revision, as a matter of fact, amounted to very little. It was played in two acts instead of one, with the intermezzo dividing two scenes in the second act, making it, in reality, in three acts, and the tenor air was added in the last scene.

No more striking proof of Puccini's popularity could be found than the fact that the new opera quickly came to London. It was seen at Covent Garden on

July 10, 1905, Campanini being the conductor, and was cast as follows :

<i>Butterfly</i>	.	.	.	.	DESTINN.
<i>Suzuki.</i>	.	.	.	.	LEJEUNE.
<i>Pinkerton</i>	.	.	.	.	CARUSO.
<i>Sharpless</i>	.	.	.	.	SCOTTI.
<i>Goro</i>	.	.	.	.	DUFricHE.
<i>Zio Bonzo</i>	.	.	.	.	COTREUIL.
<i>Yakusidé</i>	.	.	.	.	ROSSI.

Its splendid performance was helped in no small degree by the superb interpretation of the name part by Mdme. Destinn, and the news of its favourable reception was one of the greatest pleasures ever afforded to its composer. It was given again early in the autumn season of the same year, by the company, conducted by Mugnone (who, by the way, was not the person of the same name whose death was chronicled very soon after the conclusion of the season), and for which the composer came over, having been away at Buenos Ayres when the work was given in the summer. Zenatello, who was the original Pinkerton at the Milan production, was seen in this part on this occasion, making his first appearance in London during that season. Giachetti was the Butterfly and Sammarco the Sharpless.

The original source of the story, I believe, was a story by John Luther Long, and emanated from America. It was turned into a play by David Belasco, and, as in the case of *The Darling of the Gods*, the author's name appeared jointly with the dramatist, or adaptor, on the play bills. The simple touching little story depends rather upon its pathos

and atmosphere, which is decidedly poetical, than on any great dramatic situation. A lieutenant, F. B. Pinkerton, of the United States Navy, goes through a ceremony of marriage with a little Japanese girl, with no intention of regarding the contract as in the least degree binding. Little Butterfly (or Cio Cio San, as her Japanese name is) thinks differently, and after her child is born watches and waits anxiously for the return of her husband. Sharpless is a friend of Pinkerton's, and is the consul at Nagasaki, and he tries to break the news gently to the sorrowful girl who has been so cruelly misled, and in the "letter" song in the last act is provided with one of the most subtle and dramatic numbers in the whole work. Butterfly believes in Pinkerton's fidelity and honour up to the end, when her ideal is shattered by the arrival of Pinkerton's wife, an American woman, who wants to befriend the child, and who has apparently condoned Pinkerton's lapse from the strict path of virtue. Butterfly, however, prefers to die by her own hand, and this she does, after caressing the child and giving way to a torrent of grief, and pathetically placing an American flag in the baby's hand. Pinkerton comes in time to see her pass away, and in calling her name in an outburst of sorrow and remorse, the story ends.

In *La Bohème* it has been seen how singularly happy Puccini was in stringing together, by the flow of his music, a dramatic scheme that is concerned with detached scenes and incidents; and in *Madama Butterfly* he is equally successful and characteristic. The music is essentially vocal, but the chief melodies

are often to be found in the orchestral fabric, a feature which comes out more prominently in this work than in any of this composer's since *Manon*, and which goes to prove that it stands as his chief orchestral achievement.

The present work begins in somewhat curious fashion with a tonal fugue, as if to show that the composer with all his modernity has still a regard for the old forms. A similar figure is used for the opening of the second act. The first indication of the Japanese character in the music—and this flavour is very sparingly introduced—comes when Goro (a sort of marriage broker) parades his wares, in the shape of girls, before the lieutenant. There is here a very distinctive melody in octaves underneath the vocal part, which is most effective. Several of the little melodies make an entrance after their first quotation much after the fashion of the old *ritornello*, which is an interesting point, among several, to note in Puccini's working out, on quite modern lines, of his scheme. The themes are often altered, in place of development, by a change in the time; and at the opening of the first act several examples are to be found, while here and there an Eastern character is given to the music by the frequent use of the flat seventh. Another noteworthy feature is the constant modulation by means of chords of the seventh.

Sharpless, the friend (a baritone), makes an entry with a fine burst of melody—the theme, easily recognised on hearing the work, which is associated with this character, being one particular rhythmic distinction—and when Pinkerton (the tenor) explains

that he has bought the house, and probably the little lady with it, on an elastic contract, there is a clever counterpoint in the music to the introductory fugue. Pinkerton's first chief solo—the music, of course, runs on continuously from start to finish—is a broad and vocal aria, quite allied to the old form. The general trend of the music gets brisker at the entry of Butterfly and her girl friends. Butterfly's first song, a beautiful "largo," in which she tells of her approaching happy state, is skilfully blended with the sopranos of the chorus, and ends with a high D flat for the soloist. The procession and arrival of Butterfly's relations give an opportunity for some humour in the music, which is quaint and characteristic, and brings in a clever theme for the bassoons. Just before the signing of the contract, Butterfly has a pathetic air, in which she states that, fully believing in Pinkerton, she has embraced the Christian religion and discards her native gods. Soon after, a noisy and cantankerous old uncle of the bride comes in to protest against the union. Here is another of the few examples of Japanese music, and his entry is shown by a quaint march of the conventional pattern chiefly in unison. After the guests leave, Butterfly and Pinkerton have a very tender scene, and begin a duet of great charm. Butterfly's share continues rather more vigorously when she is preparing for the marriage chamber, while Pinkerton has a contemplative air as he admires her pretty movements. The act ends with a strenuous outburst of love and longing, both voices going up to a high C sharp by way of a finish.

The second act is in Butterfly's little house, and is divided into two sections without a change of scene, the curtain being lowered merely to mark the passage of time. Butterfly and her faithful maid Suzuki begin to feel the pinch of poverty, and the desertion of Pinkerton is soon realised, although Butterfly will not believe it. Butterfly has a characteristic air, vocal but possibly commonplace, and quite typical of “Young Italy,” in which she explains that Pinkerton will come back, how she will see the smoke of his vessel, and watch him climbing the hill from the harbour. Sharpless then comes in to try and break the news, and brings in a former native lover, a Prince, Yamadori, who is evidently quite willing to accept Butterfly as his spouse and make her happy. But she simply bids Sharpless to write and tell his friend Pinkerton that Butterfly and Pinkerton's son await the coming of their lord and master. The first scene ends with Butterfly, the maid, and the child sitting up all the night to watch for the arrival of Pinkerton's vessel. She dresses herself in her wedding garments, and decorates the little house with flowers. The maid and the child soon fall asleep, but as the moonlight floods the scene Butterfly remains rigid and motionless. A delicate instrumental passage in the music gives the idea of the vigil, in the nature of an intermezzo, and a fresh and pleasing effect is obtained by the use of a humming with closed lips, by the chorus outside, of the melody, supported by the somewhat unusual instrument, a viol d'amore. It is a curious instance, and probably the first, of the use of this “*bouche fermée*” effect as

an integral part of the orchestration. For a special effect, Puccini also adds to his score in another place the Hungarian instrument, a *czimbalom*, added to the dulcimer.

The second scene has a rich, picturesque, and gay opening, the voices of the sailors and the bustle of the vessel's arrival being well shown in the bright music. The end of the tragedy is near, and is very pathetic. Pinkerton is full of remorse, and his wife Kate tries to console Butterfly, but the little Japanese girl, with her heart broken when she learns that Pinkerton has passed out of her life, decides to kill herself. She bandages the child's eyes, commits the deed behind a screen, and then staggers forward to die with her arms about the child. With Butterfly's farewell to the child the work ends, as Pinkerton and Sharpless come in to see her die. The music ends with a curious outburst of Japanese character almost in the nature of an epilogue, and oddly enough it ends on a chord of the sixth in place of the accustomed tonic.

All through the music is fresh and interesting, and, provided that by the setting and general interpretation the necessary picturesque atmosphere is established, the opera proves singularly attractive. From the nature of the story, the text reads extremely well in English; in fact, contrary to usual custom, much of the dialogue is strange in Italian, in which mellifluous tongue there is no equivalent apparently for "whisky punch" or "America for ever!"

With this last opera of Puccini we come to the end of the chapter, and with it, he may fittingly be left to

the verdict of those who shall come after. At the time of writing no one can say with what the gifted melodist will follow it—whether one of the few themes which have been mentioned as being in his mind will materialise, or whether the "Notre Dame" of Victor Hugo, or a certain play of Maxim Gorky's will eventually come to an achievement. Certain it is, that the present success of *Madama Butterfly*, with all its progress on the purely orchestral side, cannot fail to call attention to the earlier works, particularly *Le Villi*, *Edgar* and *Manon*, as being compositions of singular sincerity.

One of Mr. E. A. Baughan's most interesting pieces of criticism, I think, was that written in the *Outlook* of July 15, 1905, after the first production of *Madama Butterfly* in England. After making comparison between Puccini and other modern Italians on the subject of musical expression of a theme, in general, he deals, in characteristic fashion, with the dramatic structure of the opera in question.

"The story itself, as arranged by the Italian librettists, has also grave defects as the subject of an opera. The character of Madame Butterfly herself, with her *naïve* love for the American naval officer, her belief that she is a real American bride and that he will return to lift her once more into the paradise from which she was so cruelly cast out by his departure, and, when the truth of her "marriage" is at last revealed, her tragic recourse to the honourable dagger is a fit subject for music. The emotions to be expressed are mainly lyrical. The other characters are outside musical treatment. F. B. Pinkerton, the

American naval officer, is never possessed of any lyrical emotion, except when he expresses his remorse for the consequences of his misdeeds ; Sharpless, the American consul, who acts as a go-between, feels nothing but a vague disquietude, which is easily drowned in a whisky-and-soda, and later a rather tender pity for Butterfly ; Goro, the marriage-broker, is antipathetic to music ; Mrs. Pinkerton is the merest of shadows ; and of all the cast the only characters that have thoughts or feelings which can be interpreted by music are Butterfly's faithful maid, Suzuki, and her uncle Bonzo, who objects on religious grounds to Butterfly's marriage. Puccini has written a love-duet for the American naval officer and Madame Butterfly, but as he can make no pretence to any more passionate feeling than a passing sensualism there is a want of emotional grip in the scene. Then the Japanese environment of the story does not help the composer. Madame Butterfly is only Japanese by fits and starts. When she is emotional she is a native of modern Italy, the Italy of Mascagni, Leoncavallo and Puccini himself. It could not be otherwise, for there is no musical local colour to be imitated which would serve in passionate scenes.

"The composer has overcome many of these difficulties with much cleverness. When the stage itself is not musically inspiring, he falls back on his orchestra with the happiest effect. The prosaicness of the European lover and his friend the Consul and the sordid ideas of the Japanese crowd are covered up by a clever musical *ensemble*, and the whole drama

is drawn together by Puccini's sense of atmosphere. . . . Madame Butterfly herself is a musical creation. The composer could not, of course, make her Japanese, but very poetically he has made her musically *naïve* and sincere. She is a fascinating figure from the moment when she appears singing of her happiness in having been honoured by the American's choice. Her share in the love duet is also well conceived. It is not exactly passionate music; rather ecstatic and sensitive. And the gradual smirching of this butterfly's brightness until in the end she becomes a wan little figure of tragedy is subtly expressed in the music. It is not deep music—indeed it should not be—but it has all the more effect because it is thoroughly in character. Even when Madame Butterfly sets her child on the ground and addresses to him her last worship before dying with honour she is not made to rant by the composer. A German would not have forgotten Isolde's Liebestod; a Mascagni would have remembered his own Santuzza; a Verdi would have metamorphosed the Geisha into an Aïda; but Puccini has kept to his conception of the character and she is never once allowed to express herself on the heroic scale."

Madama Butterfly is published (like all the operatic works of Puccini) by Ricordi, who, with the vocal score (the English translation being by R. H. Elkin), departed from the usual style of binding and issued it in a very decorative "Japanesque" cover of white linen, with all sorts of tasteful little designs—butterflies and flowers—jotted about on the cover and on the margins.

My final paragraph may well be an expression of thanks to those who have been kind enough to assist me with the preparation of my little book. First of all I would thank Signor Puccini, who has cheerfully submitted to two things which he cordially detests—sitting for his photograph on two special occasions and answering letters. Again would I thank him for the time he was good enough to spare me when I had the pleasure of meeting him in London during his last two visits. Then to Messrs. Ricordi, who not only have been at considerable pains to verify casts, first performances and biographical details, but have generously enriched my library of opera scores by those Puccini works which I did not possess. Yet again, to Mr. C. Pavone, their representative in London, for considerable assistance most cheerfully rendered ; and to my friends Mrs. John Chartres—for helping out my very limited knowledge of Italian, and Mr. Percy Pitt—for allowing me to see his orchestral scores of the Puccini operas.

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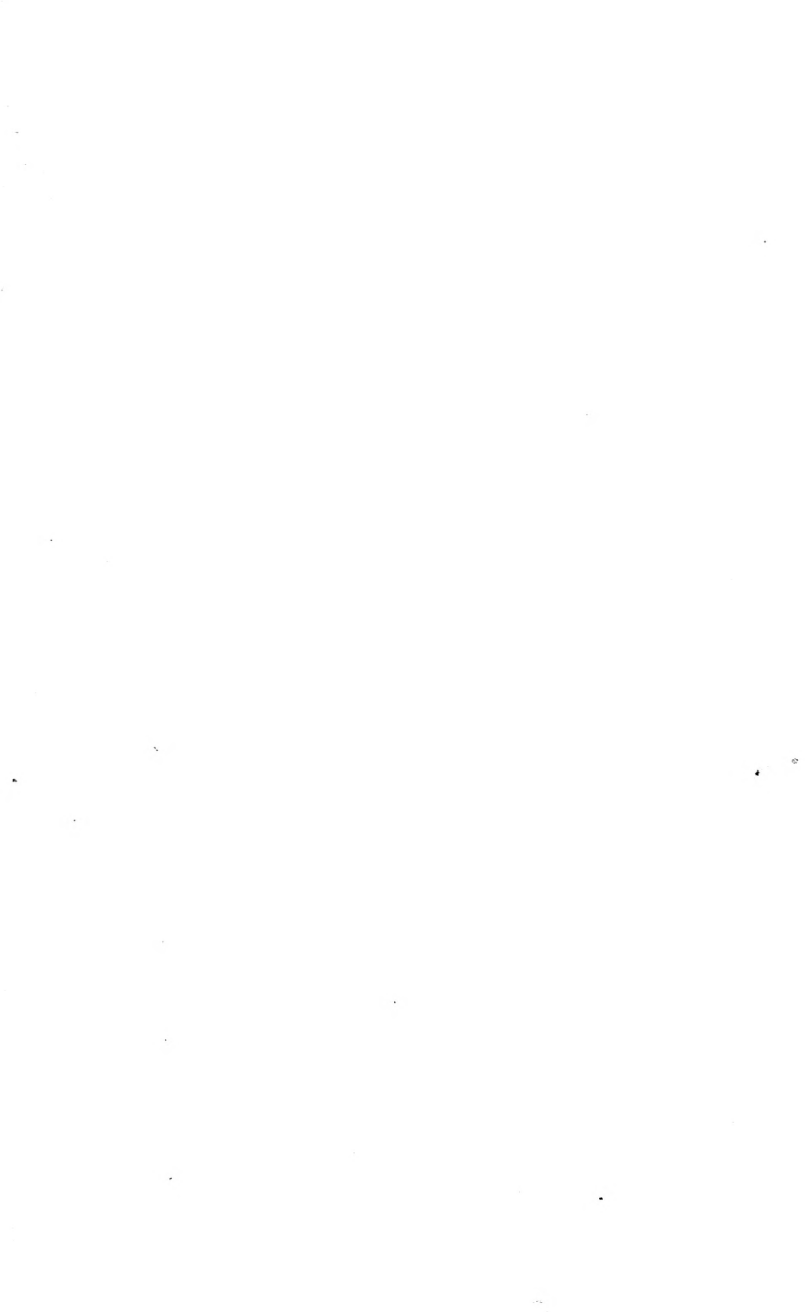
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